

Three convicted for plotting to kill Spain's king

MADRID (R) — Spain's high court sentenced three suspected Basque separatist guerrillas to a total of 109 years in prison for plotting to kill King Juan Carlos in 1995, court officials said Monday. The court handed down prison sentences on Juan Jose Rego, Jorge Garcia and Ignacio Rego for crimes against the crown and belonging to an armed band. The trial attracted widespread interest among Spaniards when it started in Madrid, January 22.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جورديان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية "الواي"

Israeli minister wants to jam Palestinian radio

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Communication Minister Limor Livnat wants to jam Palestinian radio broadcasts she deems anti-Israeli, an official said Monday. Ms. Livnat wrote to Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu saying that the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) radio station, the Voice of Palestine, "is increasing calls to hatred and violence against Israel and its people, which are deliberately presented in a negative light," the official said. The official said Ms. Livnat backed up her request with detailed quotes from broadcasts of the station's propaganda hostile to the Jewish state. The minister said the attitude exhibited by PNA contravenes the autonomy accords Israel signed in 1993 with the Palestinians.

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U.N. says Iraq submits aid plan for approval

BAGHDAD (R) — The United Nations in Baghdad said Monday that Iraq had submitted a new aid distribution plan, the terms of which have been agreed with U.N. officials, to U.N. headquarters in New York. "Today the government of Iraq has sent officially its aid distribution plan to the United Nations in New York," U.N. coordinator Staffan de Mistura told Reuters. Baghdad had made the completion of new plans for handing out aid under the U.N.'s oil-for-food deal a condition for resuming crude exports under the second phase of the agreement which began last December. Iraq finalized the details of the plan with the U.N. in Baghdad a week ago. Mr. De Mistura said the Iraqi government had reiterated its insistence that the distribution plan be approved before it restarted crude exports. Western diplomats said last week that it will take around one week for U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other U.N. officials to review and approve the plan, setting the stage for Iraq to submit a new pricing formula for renewed oil sales.

Panel tells Arafat officials must face trial

GAZA CITY (R) — A committee appointed by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to investigate corruption concluded Monday he must swiftly enact stringent reforms and that some officials must be put on trial. "We have discovered serious shortcomings and there are people who are involved who should be put on trial," said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, head of the Presidential Committee on Corruption which submitted a 127-page report to Mr. Arafat.

Bomb blast at Turkish Islamist party building

ISTANBUL (R) — A small bomb exploded at a branch office of Turkey's Islam-based Welfare Party Monday but there were no casualties, Anadolu news agency said. It said the windows of the party's office in Istanbul's Zeytinburnu district were broken by the blast. Welfare is led by Necmettin Erbakan, who resigned last month under pressure from the secularist military after a stormy year as Turkey's first Islamist prime minister.

Cyprus says Turkish integration threatens harm peace talks

NICOSIA (AFP) — Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides said Monday the climate of peace talks between the island's two communities had been spoiled after Ankara threatened to integrate northern Cyprus into Turkey. Turkey made the announcement Sunday — the 23rd anniversary of its invasion of the northern third of the island — after the European Union named Cyprus as one of six nations that could start membership talks next year. The move followed the first direct talks between leaders of the Greek.

Corruption commission urges Arafat to dismiss bureaucrats PNA wasted or mismanaged \$326 million equal to 40 per cent of their budget in '96

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A special commission investigating corruption in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) urged Yasser Arafat Monday to sack several ministers and senior bureaucrats for misappropriating public funds and abuse of power.

"It is not only a waste of money, it goes well beyond that, it is a question of bad management, lack of experience and violating regulations," said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, PNA's secretary general who chaired the commission.

Mr. Arafat created the commission to investigate an internal audit which found that some \$326 million, 40 per cent of the self-rule government's budget, had been wasted or mismanaged by PNA departments in 1996.

The report said the "official accounts of certain ministries were opened in the name of the minister, without the finance ministry being notified, and grants and foreign aid were deposited in these accounts, which were not registered on the ministries' budgets."

The 127-page report, issued after a two-month investigation, was presented to the Palestinian president with recommendations that several ministers and senior officials be sacked, but Mr. Abdelrahim would not identify them. "There are such recommendations, it is up to the president to decide," he said.

Another committee member, Judge Majid Masimi, said those implicated in the report were "ministers, director-generals (of min-

istries) and other senior officials."

"We recommend that the people be given satisfaction," Mr. Masimi said.

Palestinian ministers were cited in the report for "abuse of power and misappropriating money from their ministries."

The elected Palestinian legislative council called for immediate action after the issuing of the report.

"The council will recommend that the ministers and other bureaucrats who are implicated be brought under investigation, because we have testimony of serious misuse of public funds and abuse of power," said Saadi Krantz, the head of the council's budget committee.

The publishing of the report and the formation of the committee represented unprecedented openness from the authority. It has often been accused of corruption since its inception in 1994 to govern self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip created by the peace accords with Israel.

A majority of Palestinians think Mr. Arafat's council of ministers should be replaced due to corruption in the autonomy government, according to an opinion poll published last month.

The Palestinian legislative council has complained that corruption was commonplace and accused officials of wasting funds on expensive villas and luxury cars.

Palestinian teachers last month held an unprecedented strike against the PNA partly motivated by what



MINISTER QUILTS: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat gesturing as he walks with Palestinian Authority Justice Minister Freih Abu Meddein (Reuters File photo)

Palestinian justice minister resigns

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian Justice Minister Freih Abu Meddein has handed in his resignation to President Yasser Arafat, Palestinian sources said Monday. Mr. Abu Meddein wanted to protest against Mr. Arafat's nomination of more than half a dozen judges last week, without informing him, the sources said. Mr. Arafat has not yet decided whether he will accept Mr. Abu Meddein's resignation, submitted Friday in Ramallah, the sources said. Named justice minister at the beginning of Palestinian autonomy in 1994, Mr. Abu Meddein recently made waves by calling for the death penalty for Palestinians who sell land to Israelis.

they saw as the unfair gap between their living standards and those of senior PNA officials.

Palestinian police, however, have pinned the corruption allegations on the

Israeli government acts to limit compensation for intifada victims

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet has approved proposed legislation to limit compensation for Palestinian victims of the intifada uprising, the Haaretz newspaper reported Monday.

Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi offered the bill in an effort to throw out some of the 5,000 cases facing the justice system. The legislation is slated to pass the first reading in the Knesset, the parliament, next week.

Palestinians have filed a total of about one billion Israeli shekels (\$280 million) in damages to the Israeli government.

The law would label as "war activity" any operations against terrorist acts if there was danger to life or limb.

It would also set the statute of limitations for such claims at one year, instead of the seven allowed under current Israeli law. The courts will be allowed to throw out any case in which it is found that the Palestinian National Authority is not co-operating in legal assistance, the paper reported.

The idea to limit such compensation arose under the government of the late, left-wing Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan tours the Indo-Jordan Chemicals Company Monday. The Crown Prince inaugurated the \$170 million project that is expected to yield around \$80 million in yearly income (Petra photo)

Jordan is one of world leading nations in fertiliser production — Crown Prince

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday inaugurated a \$170 million phosphoric acid plant in southern Jordan saying that the Kingdom has become one of the world leading nations in fertilisers production.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony at Shidiyeh phosphate mines Prince Hassan said that the success story of the Indo-Jordan Chemical Company was achieved through the joint efforts of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) which produces the raw materials, India's Southern Petrochemicals Industries Company (SPIC) and the consumer of the fertilisers in conjunction with the Riyadh-based Arab Investment Company.

The project which is expected to bring Jordan around \$80 million a year in earnings will produce over 224,000 tonnes annually of phosphoric acid at the plant near the Shidiyeh mine which provides the raw-rock phosphate material.

The entire production of phosphoric acid will be exported to India at a discount price under an 11-year purchase agreement.

In remarks at the ceremony, Prince Hassan said: "Phosphate production, which started off at Ruseifah, Hassa and later at Shidiyeh repre-

sents a facet of social and economic development in Jordan. The process represents the development of four governorates: Ma'an, Karak, Tafileh and Aqaba. My hope is to see cooperation between major companies and the concerned institutions in developing the four regions."

He said: "The development of phosphate mines in Jordan should take into account social development as well as economic development so that these areas can continue to develop after the phosphates, this national wealth, runs out. We must think of developing the Hassa town and the housing projects in the town. We should give due attention to the railway transportation between Shidiyeh and Aqaba and we should give due attention to the development of Ma'an and its surrounding areas."

"If the JPMC is one of the pioneering companies that has been very efficiently utilising natural resources, we must embrace this kind of activity and seek comprehensive development of our natural and human resources," said Prince Hassan.

Referring to Jordan's cooperation with various countries, he said that Jordan has launched economic relations with Japan, Pakistan and India.

Prince Hassan said that

cooperation between the Indian company, JPMC and the Saudi financier is bound to achieve success. This integration of efforts, he said, is bound to win Jordan a unique position as a major producer of fertilisers in the coming years.

The Kingdom, a major producer of potash and phosphates, both a main component of fertilisers, has huge reserves of rocks. It has started expanding its downstream industry to increase the value of its exports. Earlier this year, a joint \$85 million Japanese-Jordanian project to produce ammonium phosphates and compound fertiliser began production close to the Red Sea Port of Aqaba. It aims to produce eventually 300,000 tonnes of mixed fertilisers annually.

Accompanied by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Indian Minister of Chemicals M. Arunachalam and other dignitaries, the Crown Prince toured different facilities of the plant and were briefed by Jordanian and Indian technicians on the plant's production capabilities.

At the end of the ceremony, Prince Hassan distributed prizes to the senior Jordanian, Indian technicians and Saudi company officials and later met with the local residents of southern Jordan.

UNSCOM chief calls on Iraq to cooperate

MANAMA (AFP) — The new head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) called late Sunday on Iraq, where he starts his first mission Monday, to cooperate with it so that U.N. sanctions against Baghdad could be lifted.

Speaking to reporters here soon after he arrived from New York, Richard Butler said: "There is a special opportunity now for Iraq to bring to an end something that has taken far too long, in a reference to the embargo imposed since August 1990."

"It is six years since the Security Council legally and correctly decided that Iraq should be divested of

weapons of mass destruction," Mr. Butler said.

"The time has come to do it and bring it to conclusion."

Mr. Butler said he would make this message clear to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, who is in charge of relations with the United Nations, when he meets him in Baghdad Monday.

"I would urge upon him for a renewed degree of cooperation by Iraq to make (lifting of the embargo) possible," he said.

"UNSCOM is not a policeman, UNSCOM is not a judge: UNSCOM is an instrument of the Security Council with a simple and single task, to tell the Council

that Iraq has done what it has been told to do, which is to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction," Mr. Butler said.

Stressing that his organisation had no interest in dragging out the disarmament process, as Baghdad has alleged, he said: "None of us, at UNSCOM will be unhappy if we wake up three months from now unemployed because we will know that we have done our job."

Mr. Butler is to take a U.N. plane early Monday morning for Iraq to start his first mission. A former Australian ambassador to the U.N., he succeeds Rolf Ekeus of Sweden who had difficult relations with Baghdad.

Yemen-Saudi border dispute narrows

SANAA (AFP) — Saudi Arabia has delivered a new proposal on its border dispute with Yemen, narrowing the gap between the two sides, President Ali Abdullah Saleh said.

Mr. Saleh told reporters late Sunday that King Fahd's offer was delivered by Saudi Interior Minister Prince

Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz.

"We will draw up a reply to this proposal at meetings of the concerned bodies in the coming weeks, and we will send an envoy to Saudi Arabia with our definitive reply," he said.

"The gap has narrowed and the outlook is better," said the Yemeni president, adding that "some questions remain, and they will be resolved quickly, God willing."

Prince Nayef, who left Sanaa after three rounds of talks since Saturday, said King Fahd was "determined to work with President Saleh for a rapid solution to the part of the border which remains to be demarcated."

"I am optimistic and we hope the two countries will agree soon," said the interior minister, who has now visited Yemen twice in less than a month.



A Palestinian policeman displays the bomb lab discovered in a West Bank apartment, Sunday, which they suspect belonged to the anti-Israeli Hamas movement (Reuters photo)

have with the Israelis."

Israel was checking to see if the bomb that exploded at the Tel Aviv cafe was prepared at the Beit Sahour factory, the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronot said.

Col. Sheikh said police were led to the factory while investigating the death of a man killed while apparently preparing a bomb last week in Bethlehem.

The factory's discovery came as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat attempted to counter Israeli accusations that members of the Palestinian police force had planned attacks against Israel.

Mr. Arafat arrested at least four police officers Sunday and has appointed an inquiry into the Israeli allegations.

Palestinian-Americans asked to join struggle at Gaza business conference

GAZA CITY (AP) — About 200 Palestinian expatriates, many from the U.S., joined hundreds of local businessmen at a conference designed to stimulate investment in the impoverished Palestinian self-rule areas.

In his opening address, Palestinian Finance Minister Mohammad Nashashibi called for "participation of the Palestinian diaspora in the building process and development in Palestine."

He read a letter from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat urging the expatriates to "join the struggle through investment" and arguing that "self-reliance is vital, and [financial] aid will not lead to the building of a sound national economic base."

Although the Palestinians have received hundreds of millions of dollars in international aid since their West Bank-Gaza autonomy was established in 1994, investment has been meagre and the economic lot of most Palestinians has not improved.

At the four-day conference, which moves from Gaza to the West Bank

town of Bethlehem Wednesday, the Palestinian National Authority will pitch government-sponsored joint ventures in agriculture, housing, tourism and industry, and offer tax breaks and other incentives.

Palestinian-American Talat Othman, who runs a financial firm in Chicago, told the Associated Press that many expatriate Palestinians want to invest but are beset by the area's political instability and the travel restrictions imposed by Israel.

"The constant Israeli closures turn the Palestinian areas into a large prison, and this reduces the chances and ability to invest here," Mr. Othman said.

Deputy Planning Minister Ali Shaath said another major impediment to business growth was the continued absence of air and sea ports in Gaza.

The ports have been under prolonged negotiation with Israel, which is concerned about its security and wants to control who and what enters Gaza.



Palestinian expatriate and local businessmen chat during the first Palestinian expatriates business conference held in Gaza City Monday. Palestinian businessmen from Arab countries, Europe and the U.S. took part in the conference to help in the development of the Palestinian territories (AFP photo)

Peace deal for southern Sudan endorsed by council of ministers

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan's governing council of ministers has endorsed the legal apparatus for a peace deal with former southern rebels that would pave the way for a self-determination referendum, press reports said Monday.

A constitutional decree would also create a coordinating council to run affairs in south Sudan during a four-year interim period preceding the referendum, in which southern voters would between continued unity with the north and separation into an independent state.

The national assembly was to meet in a three-day extraordinary session starting Monday to debate the decree, which was

worked out by President Omar Bashir in consultation with the Sudanese United Democratic Front (USDF) grouping factions that signed the peace agreement.

The peace deal excludes the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been fighting to end Khartoum's rule over the south of the massive African country since 1983 in a war that has killed an estimated one million people.

The decree reportedly provides guarantees for freedom of belief, worship, basic rights and liberties, and allows Islamic sharia laws and customs to serve as the source of leg-

islation.

The 25-member co-ordinating council would have a chairman to be appointed by the Sudanese president in consultation with the USDF. The other members would comprise 14 ministers to be named by the president in consultation with the chairman, and the governors of the 10 south Sudanese states.

The USDF leadership wants the national assembly to approve the decree without amendments, the Akhbar Al Youm daily reported. Earlier press reports said USDF chairman Riak Machar was the most likely candidate for the chairmanship of the coordinating council.

Among the topics covered at the meeting were the situation in northern Iraq, the continuing efforts of the Iraqi opposition to confront the regime, and the INC's campaign to establish an international tribunal for President Saddam Hussein and his associates, according to a statement made by the INC.

Mr. Fatchett assured the INC President Ahmad Shalabi that British policy towards Iraq has not changed with the new Labour government. He said that the policy of keeping pressure on that Iraqi regime would remain in place, the statement said, which went on to quote Mr. Fatchett as saying that the United Kingdom sympathized with the plight of the Iraqi people.

Mr. Fatchett reiterated Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's denunciation of the regime's human rights violations and said the British government takes this matter very seriously, the INC statement said.

INC meets British minister

LONDON — The president of the Executive Council of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) which is a group opposed to the regime of President Saddam Hussein, met with Member of Parliament Derek Fatchett, minister of state for foreign & Commonwealth affairs, at the Foreign Office in London today.

Mr. Fatchett is the minister responsible for British policy in the Middle East.

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Syria angered by U.S. bills to hamper trade

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria condemned Monday bills passed by both chambers of the U.S. Congress to ban financial dealings between U.S. companies and Syria, which is on a U.S. list of terrorist states.

"The decision to stop every financial transaction between the United States and Syria shows the extent of the Zionist lobby in Congress," the government newspaper Tishrin said.

"Although the [U.S.] administration and U.S. trade circles oppose it, this unfriendly measure shows that Congress is becoming more Zionist than the Knesset [Israeli parliament]," the paper said.

The two bills, which would expand the U.S. economic embargo against Syria and a number of other countries, have gone to a joint committee of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives which is tasked with working out the differences.

The agreed-on version cannot become law unless U.S. President Bill Clinton signs it, and he has expressed opposition to the measures.

Tishrin went on to say, "the positions of most of the members of Congress

are copies of those of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, even if the positions are contradictory to the interests of the American people."

The bills, based on "Israeli accusations of Syrian terrorism ... are only a settlement of accounts between Israel and Syria via the U.S. Congress," it said.

The bills ban financial dealings between U.S. companies and governments of countries the U.S. State Department says support terrorism.

The State Department list includes Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

U.S.-Syrian trade is modest.

In 1996, the U.S. exported \$226 million in oil equipment to Syria and imported \$16.2 million in Syrian goods, according to U.S. embassy figures.

Tishrin said adoption of the bill would not hurt the Syrian economy but "would prejudice the U.S. role in Middle East peace [efforts], revive Arab hostility against the United States and prevent U.S. companies from investing in Syria."

Dead Sea scrolls still a hot topic after 50 years

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Fifty years ago on the parched banks of the Dead Sea, a young bedouin looking for a stray goat stumbled across a fragment of a 2,000-year-old manuscript that became the archaeological find of the century.

On Sunday, 129 world specialists gathered in Jerusalem for a symposium to discuss the interpretation of the Dead Sea scrolls, which have given the world a key insight into Judaism and early Christianity.

Tens of thousands of fragments found in the Qumran Caves on the northwest of the Dead Sea, mostly Biblical texts, are now on public display, triggering a hot religious, political and archaeological debate.

"Everything is there to stimulate the imagination: The caves, the bedouin child hoping to find treasure and the mysteries of the dusty manuscripts," said one expert, Andre Lemaire.

"But even more, these texts lift the veil on an era representing a turning point for the Jewish-Christian tradition which contains the roots of all western culture," added Lemaire, a Paris-based professor of history and philology.

The four-day conference will be opened by Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Israel museum in Jerusalem.

The painstaking piecing together of the puzzles and deciphering the text took 40 years — a period of time which allowed the most far-fetched theories to circulate

and controversies to rage.

"People think we are hiding something from them, while we are actually doing our utmost to decipher half a character of Aramaic script," said Abbot Emile Puech, editor of the manuscripts.

According to the most widely-accepted theory, Qumran was a pre-Christian community led by a Guru, against whom "Jesus pales as the number two Messiah," said Father Puech. "Of course, people have accused the Vatican of wanting to conceal the truth."

Thanks to the scrolls, experts now know in detail about the life of the Essenes, a breakaway Jewish sect which lived in the desert around Qumran. The group of around 100 men lived according to strict religious precepts from 152 BC to 68 AD.

The Essenes were trying to "relive the experience of the people of God in the Sinai, when Moses received the 10 Commandments," said Puech.

"The knowledge about this community enables Christians to better understand the period that preceded the life of Jesus, and therefore to better understand his preachings," Puech said.

As testimony to the thriving presence of Jewish people on the land of Judea some 2,000 years ago, the discovery was exploited by the Zionist movement shortly before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Police kill suspected militant

CAIRO (AP) — Police Monday shot and killed a suspected Islamist in southern Egypt, police officials said. One policeman was wounded in an exchange of gunfire after police discovered Mohammad Ahmad Salem hiding in a village in Assiut province, some 320 kilometres south of Cairo, officials said, speaking on customary condition of anonymity. Salem was wanted on charges of carrying out several violent attacks in the area, the officials said. Islamists launched a campaign in 1992 aimed at overthrowing Egypt's secular government and replacing it with strict Islamist rule. Nearly 1,100 people have died in the violence, which has been centred recently in southern Egypt.

Poland, Israel sign free trade deal

WARSAW (R) — Poland and Israel signed a free trade agreement Monday that provides for scrapping customs duties on most industrial goods from next January 1, the Polish economy ministry said. Under the accord, signed in Warsaw by Economy Minister Wieslaw Kaczmarek and his Israeli counterpart Natan Sharan, tariffs on other industrial products would be gradually phased out and abolished by 2001, the statement said. The statement did not say how trade in agricultural products would be regulated and no ministry official was immediately available for comment on the issue. Poland's deficit in trade with Israel increased to \$69.6 million last year from \$44.3 million in 1995 while the total exchange grew to \$99.8 million from \$85.7 million respectively. Poland mainly sold steel products, paper, minerals and wood and bought telecom equipment, machines and food.

Iranians occupy Bonn party headquarters

BONN (AFP) — About 15 asylum seekers from Iran Monday occupied the headquarters of the opposition Alliance-90/Greens Party here in a protest at the alleged ill-treatment of political prisoners in Iran. Heide Rühle, secretary-general for the Alliance90/Greens, said her party accepted and tolerated the occupation to give the Iranian opposition a forum to go public. The Iranians said five prisoners were in critical condition after entering a hunger strike in Iran at the beginning of the month. They claimed to be members of the opposition group Talash whose German headquarters are in Cologne. Occupiers called on international organisations and parties to send delegates to the prisons and press for the prisoners' release. The party, Germany's third, had known of the group's plans since Thursday, Rühle added.

U.S.-Syrian industrial-oil factory inaugurated

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syrian Oil Minister Maher Jamil has inaugurated an industrial mineral-oil factory jointly owned by the U.S. Oil Company Mobil and a Syrian firm, the official Al Thawra newspaper reported Monday. The first phase of investment in the factory was 150 million Syrian pounds, but an unspecified amount of additional investment is expected to follow, the paper said. Mobil owns 49 per cent of the factory, which is in the village of Adra, 20 kilometres northeast of Damascus, while the Syrian company, whose name was not given, holds 51 per cent. The factory, which is also called Mobil, employs 90 workers and is expected to produce 10,000 tonnes of oil a year.

Pakistani drug trafficker beheaded in S. Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — A Pakistani convicted of drug smuggling was beheaded in Saudi Arabia Monday, raising to 68 the number of people executed in the kingdom this year. Raj Wali Khan Waseel Khan was found guilty of smuggling an undisclosed quantity of heroin into Saudi Arabia, an Interior Ministry statement said. He was beheaded in the capital Riyadh. The kingdom has executed 31 drug traffickers this year. Saudi Arabia's Islamic courts impose the death penalty for rape, murder, drug trafficking and armed robbery. People convicted of those crimes are beheaded in public with a sword. Last year, 71 people were executed. Human rights groups have criticised the executions on grounds they follow trials in which suspects are not well represented by lawyers and are denied due process, such as legal appeals.

Libya advertises to invite Arab immigration

ALGIERS (AFP) — The Libyan government is eager to encourage immigration by "all Arabs," according to an advertisement published here Monday in the daily Al Khabar newspaper. Arabs from neighbouring countries, whether single or with families, are encouraged to emigrate to Libya, which wants to "achieve unity for the Arab Nation and the Arab fatherland," the ad says. Immigrants will enjoy all "their rights in transportation, lodging, sanitation services and participation in the building of a productive base in the industrial and agricultural sectors etc.," the ad pledges. To emigrate, candidates should head for the Libyan embassy with the required documents, which include certification that they are AIDS-free.

Khamenei says Iran is not afraid of the U.S.

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Monday that Tehran was not afraid of the United States because Washington could not hurt his country.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Aram Keshishian, spiritual leader of the four-million Armenian Orthodox Christians living outside their homeland.

Ayatollah Khamenei said Iran's lack of fear of the United States was nei-

ther out of naivete nor miscalculation.

"We are unafraid because we have a correct assessment of our own power and facilities," said Ayatollah Khamenei, whose comments were carried on Tehran Radio.

He said that the worst the United States could ever do was to attack Iran. "If they don't attack us, they lose, because we get stronger every day," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "And if they do attack, they still lose, because

our nation will unite under an attack and we will win more support around the world."

The United States has threatened retaliation if Iran is found to be behind a June 1996 bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 U.S. servicemen. Iran has denied any role.

Mr. Keshishian, a Lebanese, arrived in Iran last week. Some 3,000 Christian Armenians live in Iran.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO
15:35 French Programmes
16:00 Super Spon Folie
16:30 Dog House
17:00 Square One TV
17:15 Album Show
18:10 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Coach
20:00 Tilt
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Doc. — Nature of Things
22:00 News in English
22:30 West Beach
23:15 Drug Wars

PRAYER TIMES
04:08 Fajr
05:39 (Sunrise) Duha
12:42 Dhuhur
16:23 'Asr
19:45 Maghrib
21:16 'Isha

CHURCHES
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Sweifich, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation
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De la Salle Church Tel.
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622366.
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Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824338.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
651932.
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295.
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology:
Relative warm weather conditions will prevail and winds northwesterly moderate to active. On Thursday and Friday temperatures are expected to dip with normal summer weather conditions prevailing. In Aqaba, it will be hot, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 22/33
Aqaba 36/41
Deserts 19/39
Jordan Valley 25/40

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 33, Aqaba 41 Humidity readings: Amman 35 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Wissam Hziyain 748563
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahrah 820425
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim 630115
Dr. Munther Qraini 779959

Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nalroukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh 250080
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Salah Safarini 987565
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Dept. 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800

Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 0853200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 644281/6
Akileh Maternity 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 662727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marika 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09990050
Ibn Sina Hospital 099986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 1021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02127275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05 Samaa (RJ)
08:05 Damascus (RJ)
10:15 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
10:25 Beirut (RJ)
10:40 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:45 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:15 Cairo (RJ)
17:30 London (RJ)
17:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
18:30 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights
09:00 Cairo (MS)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:30 Dubai (EK)
16:40 Istanbul (TK)
18:05 Kiev (6U)
21:30 Tel Aviv (LY)
22:50 Aden (IY)
23:35 Larnaca (CY)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
01:25 Jakarta (GA)
03:00 Rome (AZ)
04:25 London (BA)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45 Beirut (RJ)
09:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15 Amsterdam, Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
13:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
13:25 Geneva, Brussels (RJ)
13:10 Paris (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:05 London (RJ)
14:05 Madrid (RJ)
21:25 Jeddah (RJ)
21:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:45 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:25 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights
04:30 Riyadh (SV)
10:00 Cairo (MS)
17:40 Istanbul (TK)
19:05 Kiev (6U)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
22:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:25 London (GA)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)
04:00 Athens (GA)
04:00 Rome (AZ)

Home N

N. official

soldiers' aid

His Majesty King Hussein received a message from the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and expressed appreciation for the assistance undertaken by UNTAC in the area of human rights. The King said he was pleased to hear that the UNTAC had been able to help the Cambodians in their struggle for peace and stability.

Queen inspects Je meets with Pea

The Higher National Council for the Jordan Festival of Culture and Art on Sunday made their first visit to the Jordanian State Opera House. The Queen, who was accompanied by the Prince, inspected the preparations for the festival and met with the members of the Council.

The Queen also toured the Jordanian State Opera House and inspected the preparations for the festival. She was accompanied by the Prince and the members of the Council.

The Queen and the Prince were accompanied by the members of the Council during their visit to the opera house. They inspected the preparations for the festival and met with the members of the Council.

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U.N. official thanks King for soldiers' aid in saving church

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday received a message from the United Nations Transitional Administrator for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium Jacques Paul Klein, who expressed his appreciation for the noble task undertaken by Jordanian army units operating within U.N. peace keeping forces in the region.

"I cannot tell you how pleased I am to have your soldiers under my com-

mand," Mr. Klein stated. With the help of Jordanian soldiers, the population in the village of Mikusevci was able to resume its religious rituals at the Greek Catholic church for the first time in five years, he affirmed.

"Serbian extremists in the village had threatened to dynamite what remained of the church, which they had already vandalised, if any attempt was made to hold services," Mr. Klein explained. "This was a challenge we could not let

pass."

He noted that "the assistance and security provided by your soldiers made it possible for the villagers to perform their religious services."

"Though of another faith, your soldiers realised that these villagers are also children of the Book and that no one has the authority to deny any person their right to worship God [as they see fit]," Mr. Klein concluded.

Queen inspects Jerash festival site and meets with Peace Corps members

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Higher National Committee for the Jerash Festival of Culture and Art Sunday made their final inspection visit of the festival site, a Royal Court statement said.

Her Majesty Queen Noor also toured the North Theatre of Jerash, which has been restored by the Department of Antiquities, and met with the Jordanian team of expert conservationists who have worked on the site for over three years.

The Queen commended them on their great achievement, affirming that this remarkable structure will enhance the ancient city of Jerash and will make the Jerash festival the first of its kind to have two fully-functioning Roman theatres, the statement said.

The North Theatre, which is referred to as an "Odeum" (a recital hall), also served as the Roman "Bouleuterion" (Council Chamber) of ancient Jerash.

It was destroyed by an earthquake in the middle of the sixth century, converted into a pottery-making complex in the eighth century and finally abandoned at the beginning of the ninth century, the statement said.

This summer, the North Theatre will resume its historic function and host the Jerash festival's musical performances and poetry recitals as it did in past eras.

The Jerash festival will celebrate its seventeenth anniversary this year with vibrant performances by renowned international groups and artists such as the Russian Omsk Ballet Company performing Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty," the Original Shakespeare Company playing "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and Japanese, South African, and Chilean folklore groups.

The festival's popular shows, held at the South Theatre, comprise performances by talented Arab artists, including the Lebanese singers, Nawal Al Zuhbi, Assi Al Halani and Wael Kfoury, Iraqi singer, Kathem Al Saher and Hani Shaker from Egypt.

For "alternative" music fans, there will be the Heizia Operetta, an Algerian variation of Romeo and Juliet, Jordan's Sakher Hatat's solo Oud performance at the Artemis Steps, the Mediterranean Youth and Euro-

pean Union Baroque Orchestras as well as the New York Broadway Duo's repertoire sung by the renowned soprano Rosemary George, the statement said.

Members of the Higher National Committee include the Queen, HRH Princess Wijdan Ali, Senator Leila Sharaf, In'am Mufti, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji, Minister of Culture and Youth Qasem Abu Ein, Michel Hamameh, Ihsan Ramzi, Nader Dhahabi, the director of moral guidance, and Akram Masarweh.

At the end of the visit, the Queen met with Peace Corps volunteers at the North Theatre.

The 27 volunteers, who arrived last May, are working with the Ministry of Social Development, the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN).

The Queen described their alliance as a "mutually enriching partnership which will promote understanding as well as support development efforts in the country."

The volunteers, most of whom are women, are involved in small-scale income-generating projects as well as assisting in national environmental management.

Jordan is the eighth Arab country in which Peace Corps volunteers have served since the organisation's establishment in 1961, according to the statement.

Currently, there are approximately 6,500 volunteers serving in 90 countries worldwide.

More than 148,000 Americans have served in the Peace Corps to date, providing assistance in education, health, nutrition, agriculture, the environment and small business development.

The Queen was accompanied by Ms. Sharaf and received by Mr. Biltaji, Minister of Social Development Dr. Mohammed Mamsar, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Wesley Egan, Director of the Department of Antiquities Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, Mr. Masarweh and the mayor and governor of Jerash, according to the statement.

Mutawi to conclude agreements in London

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi left for a two-week official visit to London Monday, affirming that he would examine British laws regarding media and publication regulations as well as the administrative functions of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

In a pre-departure statement, Dr. Mutawi stated that he planned to meet with British parliamentary members and politicians to discuss peace process developments.

Dr. Mutawi also intends to sign a number of agreements, one of which will cover the relay of BBC transmissions through Radio Jordan.

Dr. Mutawi is expected to conclude a similar deal with Radio Monte Carlo as well as with French television.

Agreements for joint television production, training courses for Jordan Radio and Television and Jordan News Agency, Petra, employees are also expected to be concluded during the minister's visit.

Islamist rejects Muslim Brotherhood's justifications for elections boycott, demands 'real motivations'

AMMAN (J.T.) — A leading Islamist yesterday cast doubt on the Muslim Brotherhood's proffered reasons for boycotting the upcoming parliamentary elections, due in November, and demanded that its leadership reveal the "real motivations" for the decision.

Bassam Emoush, member of the Executive Council of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), refuted Brotherhood allegations that the boycott was attributable to the Kingdom's current political atmosphere.

In his weekly column, published in Al Ra'i Arabic daily, he described the Brotherhood's statements as illogical.

According to Dr. Emoush, neither the contested one-person, one-vote electoral system nor any need to amend the Constitution nor any supposed democratic infringements are adequate explanations for such a boycott.

"Did they decide to boycott

because they wanted to amend the Constitution? Of course not. I personally have not heard that the Brotherhood had organised a conference to study the Constitution and cast its opinion," he wrote. "I believe that the Brotherhood's leadership was urged to specify constitutional demands since it [knows] that any constitutional amendment cannot be implemented [merely] through general demand."

Dr. Emoush's refutations of Brotherhood arguments are as follows:

• The decision to boycott was not in protest of normalisation... [as] the Brotherhood's chance to call on its deputies to resign was when the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty was brought to the Lower House of Parliament for endorsement. But it did not take such a step at that time.

• The boycott was not a protest of the one-person, one-vote electoral

system either as the Brotherhood participated in the 1993 parliamentary elections (which were based on the same law). In addition, it is the right of the people to ask in which way this temporary election law became permanent.

• Nor are the 1997 amendments to the Press and Publications Law [any reason to boycott] as we have protested against the "obscene and degrading press;" and because the Brotherhood does not have any means to abort the application of this law. On the contrary, the Brotherhood can, through its deputies, change the conditions set in the new amendments or at least muster some financial support (for the weeklies) to secure the minimum capital required by the new law.

• The Brotherhood did not boycott because of infringements on public freedoms. Not one member of the Brotherhood was detained.

Were public freedoms [more extensive] in 1993 and was the government in which the Brotherhood participated one of armed struggle?

• The boycott was not based on any deterioration of the economic situation either. Since the establishment of the Jordanian state, there has never been a budget presented by the government without a deficit. Will the boycott help reduce taxes and decrease prices? We'll see.

• And finally, the Brotherhood will not boycott out of concern for other political parties. The Brotherhood does not respect the other parties with whom it has had contact. The Front attempted to initiate some sort of cooperation with other parties to enhance dialogue but to no avail. Some, such as the Communists and Ba'ath parties, have already announced their projected participation.

CHE announces university acceptance regulations

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Higher Education (CHE) Monday announced regulations for acceptance in public and private universities for the 1997-98 academic year.

Only students who have passed the Tawjihi examination can apply.

The council asserted that students with Tawjihi certificates in science can apply for seats at the faculties of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, nursing, veterinary medicine, sciences, and the humanities.

Students who passed the literary examination can apply for seats in the humanities, it stated.

Those who finished the industrial examination can apply for departments of engineering, sciences, physical education, agriculture or general education, according to the council.

Students who finished the examination in commerce, hotel management or domestic economy can apply for seats in the department of humanities.

Students who studied nursing can apply for seats in the faculties of nursing, physical education and general education, according to the council.

The council confirmed that the lowest Tawjihi grade accepted by the faculties of medicine, and dentistry is 85 per cent.

In the faculties of engineering, pharmacy and veterinary medicine the lowest acceptable grade is 80 per cent.

For all other departments the minimum grade is 65 per cent, according to the council.

The council announced Sunday that the Kingdom's seven state universities will admit 15,652 students in the 1997-1998 academic year.

Of this group, 2,784 students will take postgraduate courses and 970 pupils will take vocational diploma training courses.

Director of the Council of Higher Education Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education Nazeq Qteishat said that 5,863 students will be accepted at the University of Jordan, 3,071 at Yarmouk University, 855 at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), 750 at Al al-Bait University, 4,360 at Muta University and 510 students will be admitted at Al Hashemiyeh University.

Dr. Qteishat also announced that community colleges in Jordan will admit 11,000 students for the coming academic year.

The Council of Higher Education has assigned 10 per cent of public university enrolment for students from other countries which have cultural agreements with Jordan, Dr. Qteishat noted.

In addition, the council has decided to accept 300 undergraduates and 50 graduate students from the West Bank at Jordanian universities. In implementation of an agreement signed by Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority

(PNA), according to Dr. Qteishat. Thirty seats in government universities have been assigned to students from Palestinian lands, occupied in 1948.

Head of the Scholarships Department at the Ministry of Higher Education Hikmat Omari announced Sunday that the ministry will send 350 undergraduates to study in foreign countries which have offered scholarships to Jordanian students in accordance with cultural agreements reached between the Kingdom and these countries.

The ministry will select the candidates for different specialisations from all governorates of the Kingdom, he added.

The ministry has also decided to offer scholarships to students wishing to study in Jordanian universities and has created a special selection committee for this purpose, according to Mr. Omari.

The Ministry of Education announced Sunday that the results of the 1996-1997 Tawjihi examinations will be announced on July 25.

Ministry Secretary General Issat Jaradat affirmed that the results will be announced by Minister of Education and Higher Education Munther Masri at a press conference in his office.

More than 92,000 students took the Tawjihi examination last month.

Kingdom plans to improve refugee camp infrastructure

CAIRO (Petra) — The Kingdom has submitted a plan to improve conditions of Palestinian refugees currently residing in Jordan.

Jordan's representative to a Cairo meeting, convened by Arab countries hosting refugees, presented details of the project to attending delegates.

Director of the Palestine Affairs Department Ibrahim Tarshih stated that in a drive to redress poverty and improve the national economy, Jordan has formulated plans to improve services in the refugee camps at an estimated cost of JD 173 million.

The plan details improvements to water and electricity infrastructures for residents of the country's 13 camps as part of an overall JD 400 million project to be implemented over the next five years.

Jordan, which hosts approximately 1.4 million Palestinian refugees, is spending an annual average of \$300 million on the camps towards the provision of basic services for the refugees, according to Mr. Tarshih.

The refugees are considered Jordanian citizens and are entitled to all services pertaining thereto, he said.

Mr. Tarshih explained that during the five-day deliberations, the delegates reviewed the social and economic conditions of Palestinians under Israeli rule, the Judaisation of Jerusalem, Israeli settlement programmes, Israeli dominance of water resources, the deficit facing UNRWA and ways to ensure more funds for the agency from donor nations in the Arab World, Asia and Europe.

Delegates to the meeting urged UNRWA to reduce expenses and requested that wealthy Arab countries provide funds to help UNRWA overcome current financial difficulties, he added.

Conference members also requested that UNRWA continue to provide social, health and educational services to refugees until a comprehensive permanent solution has been reached.

Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Conference and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) sent representatives to the conference which ended Monday.

Union calls on RJ to halt dismissals

AMMAN (J.T.) — The General Union of Workers in Air Transport and Tourism has called on the management of the national air carrier, Royal Jordanian (RJ), to reconsider its decision to lay off workers as part of the airline's plans to cut expenses.

A report in Al Ra'i Arabic daily Monday stated that RJ has laid off 70 of its workers over the past two weeks.

The union stated that it is incumbent on management to safeguard worker rights and prevent further increases in the number of unemployed workers in Jordan.

If no agreement has been reached regarding RJ workers, Union President Abdul Halim Khaddam stated that a meeting will be held for the union board Saturday to study the situation.

The union insists that RJ refrain from implementing article 78A of the airline's personnel regulations which have served as the basis for the dismissal of workers, he added. If applied, this article could effect the dismissal of 1,000 workers in the next few months, according to Mr. Khaddam.

He stated that, as stipulated by the article, the management can rationalise any dismissal of workers simply by stating that their services are no longer needed as they are unproductive.

While the union does not condone any worker's possible negligent behaviour, he said, it is questioning RJ's criteria for considering workers unproductive, subsequently leading to their dismissal.

The union has requested that a recent decision by the Council of Ministers on the airline's restructuring not adversely affect the rights of RJ workers legally, financially or administratively, Mr. Khaddam stated.

Jordan is witnessing rising unemployment and economic difficulties, he added.

According to the union, RJ management can cut expenses in other areas but should safeguard the rights of its estimated 5,000 workers.

In efforts to economise, RJ, with debts of JD 700 million, has recently closed some of its offices in Jordan and abroad and is expected to reach an agreement with creditor banks on rescheduling debts.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

* "Maigret" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

LECTURES

* "Bioarchaeology of Sa'at A. Small Byzantine Village in the Mafraq District" by Jerry Rose at the American Center of Oriental Research (Tel. 846-117) at 7:00 p.m.

* "Zionist Schemes in the 21st Century" (Arabic) at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.

* "Inter-faith Relations in the First Muslim Century" by Dr. Averil Cameron at the World Affairs Council, Jabal Amman, Fourth Circle at 6:00 p.m. (Tel. 642706)

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings and ceramics sculptures by Arab artists at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303) until July 31.

* Paintings by Hanan Al Bounini at the Royal Cultural Centre, until July 24.

* Display of Bani Hamida hand-made products at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, until July 31 (Tel. 638696/7).

* Works by Iraqi artists Ali Al Najjar and Zia Hussein at Balaadna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5337598), until July 23.

* Photo exhibition entitled "Jerusalem in Danger" by Khalid Al Zaghari at the Modern Educational School, Khaldi, until July 31.

* Photography exhibition by Jan Kasay, at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until July 29.

* Paintings by Ali Al Ghoul at Greater Amman Municipality Cultural Department, Ras Al Ain, until July 31.

* Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition, showing works of 60 Arab artists, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until July 24.

Ministry to ensure cooperation in elections

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Interior will attempt to ensure cooperation with Jordanian political parties, based on the principle of shared responsibility in handling national issues, Minister of Interior Nazeq Rashid stated Monday.

Speaking with visiting students from Yarmouk University, the minister affirmed that "the government considers political parties as national institutions enjoying full freedom."

The relationship between the ministry and these parties will be governed by the existing Political Parties Law, he added.

Mr. Rashid stated that the 1997 general elections are to be held as scheduled.

"All arrangements and measures to be taken by the Ministry of Interior in supervising the elections will be characterised by transparency and full

respect for the elections law and all other legislation," he stated.

The Ministry of Interior will take appropriate measures to facilitate the electoral process for Jordanians, enabling them to exercise their constitutional rights — whether in registration procedures, in choosing other electoral constituencies or in the actual casting of ballots.

enhance bilateral ties. The talks are expected to cover Iranian-Jordanian economic cooperation.

Parties to make final decision

AMMAN (J.T.) — A meeting of 11 opposition parties to decide on whether to boycott the 1997 elections was called for Monday. The meeting, originally scheduled to be held yesterday, was postponed in order to give time to the Islamic Action Front (IAF) - Jordan's strongest opposition group - to make a final decision on the issue, head of the coordination committee Salem Nahhas said. The IAF Shura Council is expected to meet on Thursday to decide on whether the front will abide by the guidelines of its monitoring body, the Muslim Brotherhood, and boycott the elections.

Minister receives ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Agel Biltaji Monday received Tunisian Ambassador to Jordan Izzeddine Qarqani and the two reviewed bilateral cooperation in tourism. They also discussed joint investment projects. Mr. Biltaji focused on the training of citizens of both countries in the field of tourism.

Iranian minister arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Iranian Minister of Industry Mohammad Rida Nisar will arrive in Amman Tuesday for a two-day visit with Jordanian officials to

Play wins silver medal

AMMAN (Petra) — The "Sasannah City" play, a joint production of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) and the Haya Arts Cultural Centre won the silver medal for children's television plays at the third Cairo Radio and Television Production Festival. The play focuses on children's rights as provided for by international conventions.

Jordan Times facsimile

#696183

Cambodia loyalists retake key town — Thai army

BANGKOK (R) — Troops loyal to ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh have retaken a key town in Cambodia's northwest shortly after losing it to forces from rival co-premier Hun Sen, a Thai army officer said Monday.

Officials of Mr. Hun Sen's government in Phnom Penh confirmed fighting overnight but denied losing control of the town of Samrong, which they said they entered Friday and fully controlled by Sunday.

"Last night there was fighting there," Secretary of State for Information Khiep Kanharith said Monday. "But the government is still in control."

He had no information on casualties.

The Thai army officer, based in northwestern Thailand near the border with Cambodia, said the fighting was near strategically-placed Samrong town, about 30 kilometres from the border where troops clashed Sunday, he said.

He said that late Sunday troops loyal to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen were dispersed by royalist troops, the officer said.

"We can still hear gunfire this morning inside Cambodia, but we don't know how heavy the fighting is," the officer told Reuters.

Mr. Hun Sen ousted Prince Ranariddh in a coup just over two weeks ago after driving the prince's forces from Phnom Penh, but sporadic fighting between the two sides has continued in the country's northwest.

The Japanese embassy said Monday a Japanese man had gone missing in

the area as Mr. Hun Sen's troops retreated.

Civilians from the northwest who have fled the conflict were waiting at the border hoping to cross into Thailand, the Thai army officer said.

"The border points are still closed because of the fighting. Cambodian people are waiting to cross the border to flee into Thailand. We will let them cross if the fighting gets worse," he said.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Monday in Kuala Lumpur that the postponement of Cambodia's membership in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was merely a temporary setback.

Cambodia was to have joined ASEAN, along with Burma and Laos, Wednesday on the eve of the group's annual series of meetings. ASEAN this month postponed Cambodia's induction because of the political troubles there.

"I see this merely as a temporary setback," Mr. Abdullah told an ASEAN congress of diplomats, academics and businessmen.

"I look forward to Cambodia joining the ASEAN family in the near future once the problems are resolved."

Diplomats say that could happen as early as Aug. 8, when ASEAN celebrates its 30th anniversary, or in December when the group holds its annual informal summit.

On Saturday, Cambodia's Second Prime Minister Hun Sen dismissed a push by ASEAN to open talks on

Cambodia's latest turmoil.

Mr. Hun Sen ousted first Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh on July 6 after two days of battles in the capital. Their forces in northern Cambodia began fighting and royalist troops were quickly pushed back towards the border with Thailand. Since ousting Prince Ranariddh, Mr. Hun Sen has told foreign countries to stay out of Cambodia's affairs.

Prince Ranariddh, a son of King Norodom Sihanouk, was in Singapore Monday lobbying for support among ASEAN members. He denounced Mr. Hun Sen at the weekend for rejecting ASEAN's peace efforts.

"In rejecting ASEAN mediation, I think Hun Sen is isolating Cambodia by himself," Prince Ranariddh told reporters in Bangkok. "Now I'm really afraid we'll again have civil war in my country." Prince Ranariddh does not plan to go to Kuala Lumpur for the ASEAN meetings this week, an official with his delegation said Monday.

ASEAN's decision to defer Cambodia's admission was an unprecedented move by a group whose cardinal principle is to avoid intervening in each other's affairs.

But ASEAN was heavily involved in efforts to end Cambodia's two decade-long civil war, culminating in the 1991 Paris Peace Accords.

ASEAN wanted to see a continuation of the government set up under the Paris accords and the Cambodian constitution, Mr. Abdullah told the congress.

"At the same time, we will

have to uphold the principle of non-interference in internal affairs," he said.

"We will also have to be pragmatic, work within the bounds of what is possible, and not expect of Cambodia what we have not expected of ourselves."

ASEAN's current members range from Communist Vietnam, to the absolute monarchy of Brunei, to an authoritarian government of technocrats and former generals in Indonesia. ASEAN also includes Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand.

But the group's non-intervention credo is fraying.

ASEAN has been trying out what it calls "constructive engagement" with Burma, whose military rulers have been condemned for their crackdown on a pro-democracy movement.

Malaysian acting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in an article in this week's newsmagazine, called for ASEAN "to seriously consider the idea of constructive interventions."

"Our non-involvement in the reconstruction of Cambodia actually contributed to the deterioration and final collapse of national reconciliation."

"We should have nursed the baby, at least through its teething period," Mr. Anwar said.

"Consistent with this policy, ASEAN has continued to engage Myanmar (Burma) constructively, but Yangon (Rangoon) should reciprocate by moving forward with its national reconciliation," Mr. Anwar said.

He was believed to be the first sitting member of parliament to have been sentenced to a prison term during Mr. Suharto's 30-year rule. He was freed pending an appeal.

"Aberson has been found guilty of deliberately defaming the president and we sentence him to nine months' jail," Chief Judge Soebardjo told the central Jakarta State Court.

A supporter of former PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, Mr. Aberson was accused of defaming Mr. Suharto in a speech at PDI headquarters in June last year during rallies to protest over Ms. Megawati's ousting as party chief.

He did not run in the May 29 general elections, but he retains his seat until the new parliament meets on Oct. 1.

Chief Defence Lawyer Luhut Pangaribuan told reporters: "We do not accept the decision and we will appeal."

Mr. Aberson denied the charges, saying the state constitution guaranteed legislators the right to criticise and express opinions different from the president's and state institutions.

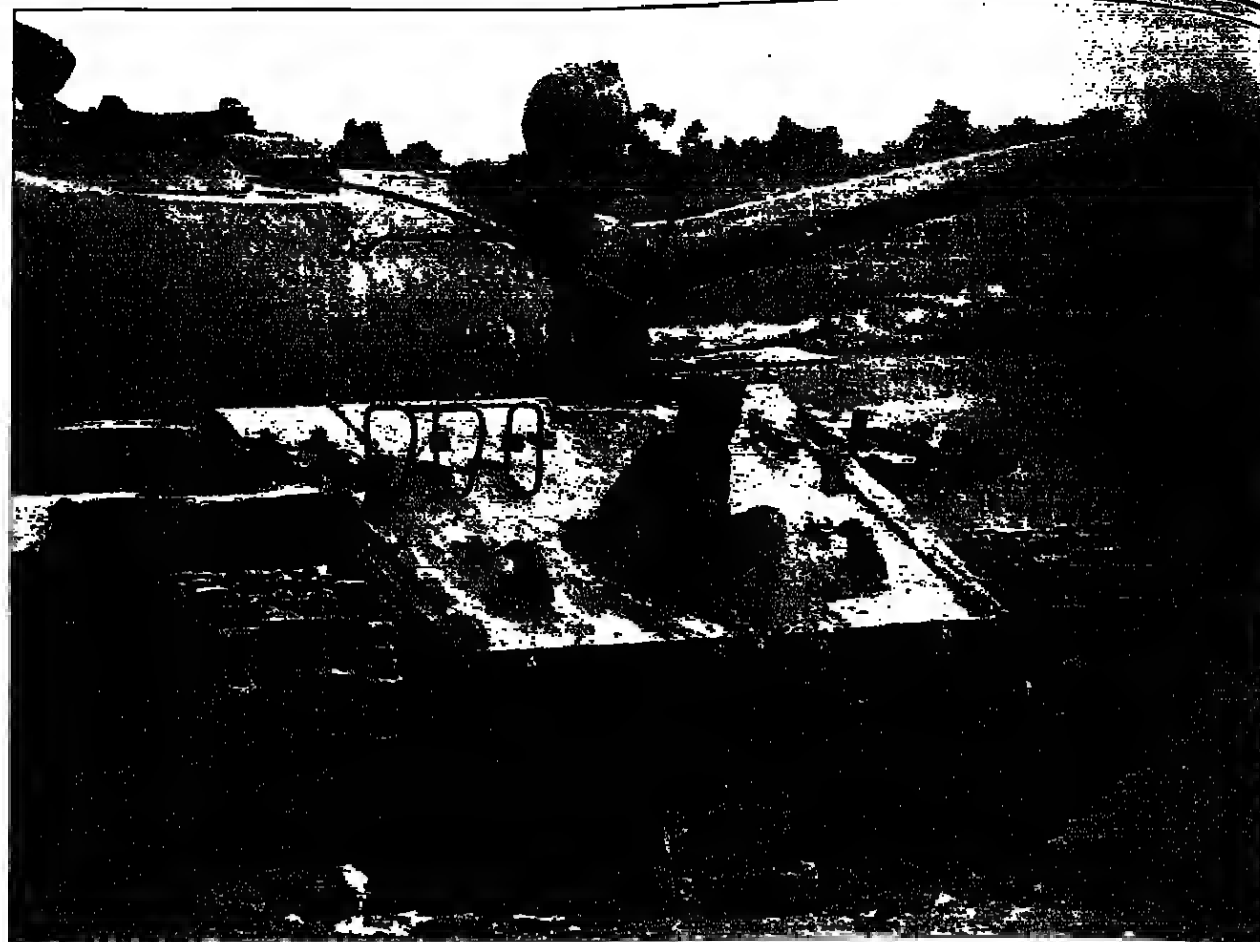
The prosecution had sought an 18-month sentence for Mr. Aberson, who was also found guilty of defaming the armed forces and the House of Representatives. The main charge carried a possible six-year term.

The prosecution accused Mr. Aberson of telling a crowd of several hundred outside the PDI headquarters: "Throughout the 30 years of Suharto's leadership, our freedom has been stolen and we are being colonised once again."

Supporters of Mr. Surjadi, the man who replaced Ms. Megawati as PDI leader at a government-backed rally in June last year, stormed the party headquarters with police support last July 27, sparking the worst riots seen in Jakarta for two decades.

Ms. Megawati was in court for the Monday hearing, and her supporters jeered as the verdict was announced. She made no immediate comment. Riot police provided strong security outside the court, but there was no trouble.

Another Indonesian legislator, Sri Bintang Pamungkas, was sentenced last February to a 34-month jail term for defaming Mr. Suharto.



Two Cambodian children Sunday play on a crippled tank outside Samrong, 20 kilometres south of the Thai border in northern Cambodia. Thai military sources said troops loyal to ousted co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh have retaken Samrong from his rival co-premier Hun Sen's forces. Mr. Hun Sen's officials in Phnom Penh denied losing control of the town (Reuters photo)

Indonesian deputy sentenced for defaming Suharto

JAKARTA (R) — A member of parliament from the minority Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), Aberson Marle Sihalo, was sentenced Monday to nine months in jail for defaming President Suharto.

He was believed to be the first sitting member of parliament to have been sentenced to a prison term during Mr. Suharto's 30-year rule. He was freed pending an appeal.

"Aberson has been found guilty of deliberately defaming the president and we sentence him to nine months' jail," Chief Judge Soebardjo told the central Jakarta State Court.

A supporter of former PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, Mr. Aberson was accused of defaming Mr. Suharto in a speech at PDI headquarters in June last year during rallies to protest over Ms. Megawati's ousting as party chief.

He did not run in the May 29 general elections, but he retains his seat until the new parliament meets on Oct. 1.

Chief Defence Lawyer Luhut Pangaribuan told reporters: "We do not accept the decision and we will appeal."

Mr. Aberson denied the charges, saying the state constitution guaranteed legislators the right to criticise and express opinions different from the president's and state institutions.

The prosecution had sought an 18-month sentence for Mr. Aberson, who was also found guilty of defaming the armed forces and the House of Representatives. The main charge carried a possible six-year term.

The prosecution accused Mr. Aberson of telling a crowd of several hundred outside the PDI headquarters: "Throughout the 30 years of Suharto's leadership, our freedom has been stolen and we are being colonised once again."

Supporters of Mr. Surjadi, the man who replaced Ms. Megawati as PDI leader at a government-backed rally in June last year, stormed the party headquarters with police support last July 27, sparking the worst riots seen in Jakarta for two decades.

Ms. Megawati was in court for the Monday hearing, and her supporters jeered as the verdict was announced. She made no immediate comment. Riot police provided strong security outside the court, but there was no trouble.

Another Indonesian legislator, Sri Bintang Pamungkas, was sentenced last February to a 34-month jail term for defaming Mr. Suharto.

Fraud alleged as Taylor takes early lead in Liberia

MONROVIA (AFP) — Former warlord Charles Taylor took a step closer to realising his presidential ambitions late Sunday as his closest rival alleged that fraud had marred Saturday's crucial poll.

Official results from 250 polling sites in Monrovia County, where Monrovia is located, gave Mr. Taylor 62.4 per cent of valid votes cast in a poll deemed sound in the initial reports of international observers.

Since Monrovia, which is sheltering thousands of people displaced by the devastating civil war Mr. Taylor ignited in December 1989, is not considered a Taylor stronghold, election-watchers say the strong showing here bodes well for him.

Voting in the poll, which is meant to formally end the war, took place in some 1,900 polling sites across the country.

Mr. Taylor's closest rival, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party (UP), alleged that the Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG interfered with the vote, especially where voters did not understand the election process.

Some of these people "were either voted for, or told how to vote," Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf told jour-

nalists at her campaign headquarters shortly after the election commission (IECOM) announced the partial results at a press conference Sunday evening.

ECOMOG troops "actually took the ballots and marked them for people," she said.

"The process subjected (voters) to manipulation that has resulted in fraud... thereby undermining their true intent and their true desire to select their leadership," she said, adding that some of those who protested were beaten up by ECOMOG soldiers.

"We have one case where the number of votes cast exceeds in large numbers the number of registered voters," said Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf, who quit a senior United Nations job and took out a loan against her pension to run for president.

Ex-combatants prevented the secret casting of ballots at one site, forcing voters to exercise their franchise publicly, she alleged.

"We are going to compile as much evidence as we can and we are going to file a protest to IECOM in accordance with their regulations," she said.

"We believe if the vote was free and fair, we would have won these elections,"

she complained, adding: "Now I begin to wonder why (former U.S.) President (Jimmy) Carter spent so much time trying to convince me why I should work with Taylor, if he won."

"Now I'm implying that he (Mr. Carter) is part of the banky-panky," she declared.

Mr. Carter heads an observer delegation conducted by the center he set up in Atlanta in 1982.

The UP won 18.1 per cent of first votes announced in what IECOM stressed were preliminary results.

Earlier in the evening, ECOMOG forcibly escorted from the IECOM press conference the owner of a radio station that had allowed a UP official to broadcast allegations similar to Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's.

"There were no reports of major irregularities nor of serious incidents that could have affected the credibility of the process," read a statement released by the UN observer mission in Liberia, which deployed 317 electoral observers across the country.

Mr. Taylor's supporters meanwhile danced in the streets of some Monrovia districts late Sunday.

Powell: Washington should pursue engagement with China

HONG KONG (R) — Former U.S. military chief General Colin Powell said Monday Washington should pursue engagement with China rather than confrontation.

"The correct approach is to engage," he said, during a visit to Hong Kong.

But Gen. Powell said differences over Taiwan, arms sales and human rights, and to a lesser extent Hong Kong, would continue to be "hot buttons" in the relationship.

The 60-year-old retired general was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993 and the architect of the U.S. military victory over Iraq in 1991, when American forces spearheaded the military

coalition that ousted Iraqi invaders from Kuwait.

Gen. Powell is a keynote speaker in a programme featuring world leaders sharing their perspectives on Asia and the world.

He steered clear of some of the rows that have erupted in Hong Kong, including moves to curb civil and labour rights, since its handover to China on July 1 after 156 years as a British colony.

He jested that his last contact with China's People's Liberation Army had been when he sold them the rights to his book "My American Journey." "They are my publishers in China," he said.

"Those who have been our enemies are now becoming our economic com-

petitors, and our markets," he said.

"The pace of liberalisation is something for the leaders in Peking to determine, not for leaders in the West to lecture them about," he said.

Gen. Powell was seen as a possible candidate in the 1996 U.S. presidential election and his future in politics remains a subject of speculation.

But he has repeatedly ruled out any move into the political arena.

"I have no plans to enter political life. I'm happy in my private life and intend to remain there," Gen. Powell said in response to a businessman's question after giving a luncheon speech on leadership and his community work with the young.

Yeltsin wants campaign to explain army reform

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin told Russia's defence minister Monday to launch a publicity campaign to explain the need for military reforms.

"People need to know the true content of the reforms, and politicians need to know, so that they can make the right judgements about the first reform measures and steps," Interfax News Agency quoted Mr. Yeltsin

as saying.

He met Defence Minister Igor Sergeev at the Volzbsky Utyos resort in central Russia, where the president is on holiday, to discuss reforms outlined in a series of decrees last week and already under fire from some military experts.

The decrees, under which personnel will be cut by 500,000 to 1.2 million by the end of 1998 and some fight-

ing units will merge, are Mr. Yeltsin's latest attempt to start reforms which he has talked about introducing for several years.

Mr. Sergeev took office in May after Mr. Yeltsin sacked his predecessor, Igor Rodionov, after less than a year in office for failing to start the reforms, intended to make the demoralised armed forces leaner and more efficient.

7 arrested in bizarre Mexican deaf mute case

NEW YORK (R) — Seven people were arrested in a bizarre case involving dozens of Mexicans, most deaf and mute, who were rescued by authorities after months of forced servitude selling trinkets on the street, police said Sunday.

"The people involved in this scheme of holding these Mexicans in bondage and in virtual slavery selected people who were deaf and mute so that they would be in more fear in this country," Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said Sunday.

Mr. Giuliani told a news conference the rescued Mexicans had been placed in the custody of New York City authorities and the American Red Cross was providing them with housing and food "until we know their correct status" in this country.

"We have to make sure that enough of them remain here so that the cases can be properly prosecuted because these people are

witnesses and will have to testify against the people responsible for this," the mayor said.

The mayor said there were indications the Mexicans were kidnapped and smuggled into the United States and entered the country from California and Texas.

Mr. Giuliani said some of them may have been here for years. At least two told the mayor they had pictures taken with him at an Ecuadorian parade a few years ago. "That indicates they have been here quite some time," he said.

Four of those arrested face federal charges of smuggling, harbouring and transporting aliens and conspiracy, while the other three face state charges including coercion, grand larceny, harassment and assault, police said.

The 64 people found by police at two Queens locations included the seven arrested early Sunday by police, the mayor said. They

included the so-called "boss" of the scheme, Alfredo Rustrian-Paoletti, 37, who pretended to be deaf and mute when brought to the station house Saturday, he said.

The others were also brought in Saturday after four of the deaf and mute Mexicans walked into a police station in Jackson Heights, in the New York City Borough of Queens late Friday, and alerted police to the situation. The two locations were written on the palms of their hands.

In sign language and through gestures, they told a bizarre story of being held captive with other handicapped Mexicans by a man who forced them to sell trinkets for pittance wages.

Of the 57 rescued, there were 27 men, 18 women, including three who were pregnant, and 12 children ranging in age from six months to 16 years, the mayor said. Mr. Giuliani said \$30,000 in cash was

recovered at one of the locations.

Police said they were living in two-family attached homes designed to house seven or eight people. "They were living on mattresses on the floor," police said.

In addition to Mr. Rustrian-Paoletti, the others facing federal charges are Jose Paoletti, 26, Rufegia Santa, 21, and Rosa Betran Sanchez, 26. Arrested on state charges were Adriana Paoletti-Lemus, 29, for coercion and grand larceny, Adelia Paoletti, 67, for coercion and harassment, and Raul Alanis, 24, for coercion and assault.

The deaf and mute Mexicans told police they were brought here from Mexico and were made to work the streets and subways of Manhattan, Queens and New Jersey peddling trinkets such as key chains with baseballs, pens and toys.

Unionists complain to Blair over IRA truce

BELFAST (R) — An Irish Republican Army (IRA) truce entered its first full day Monday under attack from pro-British Unionists who will tell Britain it is a sham aimed at getting the guerrillas' Sinn Fein spokesmen into Northern Ireland peace talks.

The head of the province's biggest pro-British party, David Trimble, was travelling to London to tell Prime Minister Tony Blair in blunt terms that Sunday's IRA truce is a ceasefire of convenience which breaks all the rules of the peace talks.

Mr. Trimble made no public statement at the weekend when the IRA called a halt to its 28-year war against British rule of the province which will admit Sinn Fein to the talks in September if Britain says the truce genuine.

But his deputy, John Taylor, said he could not negotiate a lasting settlement with Sinn Fein as long as the IRA is allowed by Britain and Ireland, co-sponsors of the talks, to hang on to its arsenal of

automatic weaponry and plastic explosive.

"I personally could not take part in talks with Sinn Fein with a gun to my head," Mr. Taylor said.

Unionists say Britain and Ireland have watered down the conditions under which Sinn Fein can take part in the talks by relegating the surrender or "decommissioning" of their arms to a committee of the talks.

Mr. Trimble's UUP and the baseline Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which meets Mr. Blair Tuesday, will argue that the IRA should surrender some weapons immediately to prove that its war is over for good and that it is wedded to democracy.

They will tell Mr. Blair, in what is likely to be his first major political challenge since winning May 1 elections, that the ground rules for taking part in the talks state that parties have to show that they have given up violence permanently.

Mr. Trimble and Mr. Blair were due to meet as a Sinn Fein delegation

travels to Belfast Stormont Buildings to claim office space at the talks' venue, from which it has been locked out several times because of the absence of an IRA ceasefire.

Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams told reporters Sunday that his "talks secretary" would be going to Stormont and hoped to meet representatives of other parties seeking a settlement to a 28-year conflict that has killed 3,200.

"We would extend a broad welcome and request other parties to start bilateral (meetings) with us," Mr. Adams said. "Other negotiations are being marked out as we speak."

It will be the first time that Sinn Fein has been allowed into Stormont. It has tried in the past to take part in the talks, claiming it is a legitimate political party, but has been barred until now because of the absence of an IRA ceasefire.

The year-long negotiations have been bogged down in argument over arms surrender with

Unionists demanding decommissioning as a condition for Sinn Fein's entry and Sinn Fein saying it should be the last item on the talks agenda.

The IRA, Europe's most formidable guerrilla army, says it will not surrender a single bullet but called the truce promising to "enhance the peace process."

Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, told reporters at the weekend that the IRA view had not changed.

"The IRA have said that they will not decommission a single bullet and I have not heard any statement from them saying they have changed their position on that."

Parties to the talks, which group the pro-British Unionists and Catholic Irish Nationalists, are due to vote on the Anglo-Irish decommissioning proposals Wednesday and to begin substantive talks on a settlement in September.



Refugees paddle a boat through a river continued in the city. M... border area. (Reuters photo)

Fish, Czech flood

Prague (R) — A massive flood of fish, mostly carp, has inundated the city of Prague, forcing residents to wade through the water to reach their homes.

The fish, which were caught in a net by a fisherman, were released into the city's main river, the Vltava, after a heavy rainstorm.

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Postmasters paddle a boat through a flooded street in Frankfurt Oder to deliver parcels as floodwater from the Oder River continued to hit the city, Monday. Disastrous floods which hit southern Poland have now reached the German-Polish border area (Reuters photo)

Polish, Czech flood fears ease; Oder, Danube rise

PRAGUE (R) — River levels slowly fell Sunday in the Czech Republic and Poland, easing fears in those countries of a new wave of the flooding that has killed nearly 100 people.

But in Germany the Oder River reached its highest level in 50 years near the Polish border and water levels rose steadily on the Hungarian section of the Danube River.

In Austria, flood waters retreated but the Danube River, which flows from the Alps to the Black Sea, was closed to shipping along an 80 kilometres stretch between Linz and Krems, state television reported.

Water levels along the Hungarian section of the Danube rose steadily, with low-level flood warnings issued for the towns of Komarom, Esztergom, Dunaremet and Rajka. No immediate threat to the capital Budapest was seen.

Hungary's flood control centre told Hungarian news agency MTI the level was expected to peak Wednesday.

Nearly 9,000 people in the Czech Republic were evacuated as heavy rain put the flood-battered region on fresh alert. Two villages close to the Polish border were flooded but there were no reports of further injuries.

But CTK news agency later reported that rivers in the eastern Czech Republic, where 46 people have died as a result of severe floods in two weeks, were slowly falling.

In eastern Germany, the Oder River, which rises in

the Czech Republic as the Odra, reached its highest level for 50 years in Frankfurt on the Oder. Matthias Platzeck, the regional government's environment minister, said the water was putting huge pressure on dykes, weakened by heavy rain.

The rain has also caused high water in the southern state of Bavaria, where a group of 18 potholers was reported missing.

In Poland, where 50 people have died, the Flood Crisis Committee said the latest rain was making rivers overflow in parts of the southwest but that damage would not be as bad as in the first wave two weeks ago.

Committee Chief Zbigniew Sobotka told a news conference that levels in the Odra — the major river flowing north along the German border which previously turned deadly and swamped towns and cities — were generally lower than before.

"Smaller mountain rivers...are overflowing on to certain areas but the wave on the main rivers, on the Odra and the Wisla, is not a dangerous one which could bring devastation like the previous floods," Mr. Sobotka said.

Though the crisis appeared to be easing in Poland and the Czech Republic, officials cautioned that people in flood-hit areas could face problems due to a lack of clean water.

Polish Health Minister Jacek Zochowski called at a news conference for steps to prevent an outbreak of gas-

tric illnesses, appealing to organisers of rescue efforts in stricken areas to supply clean water and ensure the efficient removal of refuse preferably twice a day.

"Otherwise what we all want to avoid may happen — massive gastric problems. Above all we fear dysentery and salmonella," he said.

Czech health officials have warned of the danger of disease from the many carcasses of animals killed in the floods.

Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Josef Lux told Czech Television the death toll was 46. He said more than 2,500 people had been injured, 10,000 people made homeless and 80,000 evacuated. He said 1,600 homes in more than 500 towns and villages were destroyed and more than 10,000 damaged.

"This is not just a flood, it is a real catastrophe," Mr. Lux said.

The Polish floods have inundated 1,000 towns and villages and swamped half a million hectares (1.25 million acres). Officials talk about losses of billions of zlotys.

Meanwhile, eastern German authorities braced for more floods Monday after a rise in the level of the Oder River at Ratzdorf, but downriver at Frankfurt the water level dropped slightly overnight.

Alwin Ziel, the interior minister of Brandenburg state, said the situation remains serious as flood waters are soaking 167 kilometres of dykes along the

Oder River, which could be hit by rain continues to fall.

Willi Stiegmann, in charge of monitoring operations, said the river water was putting maximum pressure on the dykes which were also threatened by erosion because of strong currents.

Mr. Stiegmann expected the floods to continue for at least 10 days.

Authorities declared a state of maximum alert Sunday after another sharp rise in the level of the Oder, marking the German-Polish border, threatened to flood the plain along the river.

The level of the Oder surged to 6.16 metres Sunday before a slight fall to 6.12 metres above normal at the end of the day.

The lowering in the water level meant that a frontier post between Frankfurt-An der-Oder and Swiecko was reopened. Vehicles had begun moving again, notably 300 lorries waiting on the German side to cross into Poland.

Two other border checkpoints in the city remained closed however.

Brandenburg Environment Minister Matthias Platzeck criticised the Polish authorities Sunday for not advising their German colleagues that they were about to open several water-retaining barriers.

Sixteen spelunkers trapped in the Bavarian Alps at Schoenau Am Koenigsee because of the sudden rise in water levels were rescued, police said.

No fighting, no change in frontlines reported north of Afghan capital

QARABAGH (AFP) — There has been no change in the frontlines north of Kabul, contrary to anti-Taliban faction claims of an overnight advance, witnesses said Monday.

Frontline Taliban fighters admitted to visiting Kabul-based journalists that Parwan provincial capital Charikar was still in the hands of the opposition. However, they claimed to control neighbouring Bagram Air Base.

In a radio broadcast Sunday night an official spokesman of ex-Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood claimed the Taliban had been pushed out of Qarabagh, 45 kilometres north of Kabul and other district centres even closer to the Afghan capital.

But witnesses said Qarabagh not only had a Taliban presence but the local bazaar was in progress for a small but lively civilian po-

pulation engaged in livestock trade mostly.

Charikar, 64 kilometres north of Kabul was captured Saturday night in a surprise guerrilla attack by Mr. Masood's forces, who also cut the main road to Kabul a few kilometres to the south of this city.

The frontline is currently located about midway between Charikar and the district centre of Qarabagh, at a T-intersection where a secondary road breaks east to nearby Bagram Air Base.

Taliban stopped an AFP journalist at a checkpoint just short of this T-intersection saying there was "no permission for journalists" to travel further.

"We control the intersection and the onward road to Charikar for about a kilometre," a Taliban commander said.

Two incoming artillery rounds were seen exploding in the vicinity of this inter-

section but this was the only military activity. The Muslim militia appeared relaxed and confident they would recapture Charikar.

"The enemies morale is low. We will push them back again, god-willing," said a white bearded militiaman.

Mr. Masood's army and the government of ex-President Burhanuddin Rabbani were ousted from Kabul by the Taliban movement in September 1996.

Between Qarabagh and Kabul, farmers were observed threshing their wheat, and some local buses were in operation.

However, small family groups were also seen evacuating the area to Kabul.

Afghan travellers reaching Kabul contradicted Taliban claims that the Muslim militants were in control of Bagram. They said the Russian-built air base 50 kilometres north of Kabul

was in Mr. Masood's hands. Bagram, however, has little strategic value for the airforces of either side in this conflict as the airbase is vulnerable to long-range artillery fire, analysts said.

Kabul came under no opposition jet strikes Monday morning. On Sunday there were five air-raids, in the worst of which eight civilians were killed and another 12 seriously wounded.

Monday's lull in fighting came after an eventful Sunday in which the Taliban suffered major reversals north of Kabul.

The Kabul expatriate community that dispenses humanitarian aid to the Afghan population in the capital have expressed concern for their safety after this recent fighting.

No immediate plans for the evacuation of some 200 Kabul-based foreigners have yet been announced.

N. Zealand plays down Australian report jibes

WELLINGTON (R) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger Monday played down unflattering comments about his country contained in a secret Australian report on its Pacific neighbours.

At the same time Australian Minister of Defence Industry Bronwyn Bishop sought to limit the damage from the report, which criticises New Zealand for its "growing dependence on Australia," especially in defence and trade.

"The briefing paper does not represent government policy or government attitude," Ms. Bishop, in New Zealand for the commissioning of an Australian-built frigate, told reporters.

Mr. Bolger told a radio interviewer, "from an Australian point of view it is very embarrassing. From a New Zealand perspective I think we will be charitable and treat it as the view of a low-level official within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia and leave it at that."

The top secret paper — marked Austro, or Australian Eyes Only — was prepared by officials for Australian Treasurer Peter Costello, who hosted a summit of economic ministers from the 16-member South Pacific Forum in Cairns earlier this month.

Left on a hotel table where a Reuters journalist picked it up, the document said New Zealand does not have an equal relationship with Australia in terms of defence and trade.

"New Zealand's growing dependence on Australia, especially in CER (Closer Economic Relations) and defence — in which New Zealand's capacity is weak and declining — underlines the strategic inequality of the relationship," the paper stated.

As a result of this supposed imbalance, Wellington tends to make external policy "gestures" that signal its freedom of action and sometimes frustrate Australian diplomacy, it said.

Ms. Bishop repeatedly declined to comment on the document's contents at a news conference other than to say it did not reflect her government's policy, and she stressed the importance of the relationship between Australia and New Zealand.

"It's a very important relationship where under CER and closer defence relations we have a very strong commitment to each other," she said.

"I can only say to you that I regard our relationship as a strong one, that it is a secure one in the sense that it's good not only for each other but it's good for the region as well."

Presidential polls in Congo put off

KINSHASA (AFP) — Congo's Constitutional Council put off presidential elections scheduled for July 27 and extended the mandate of President Pascal Lissouba, the council president announced on national radio Monday.

Note Agaton said the decision to delay the vote, taken Saturday, was in response to a request by the Congolese government.

Reacting to the announcement, supporters of Mr. Lissouba's rival and predecessor Denis Sassou Nguesso called the move a "political manoeuvre designed to torpedo the negotiations" that began last Friday in the Gabonese capital Libreville and were to resume Monday.

Six weeks of fighting in the Congolese capital Brazzaville between forces loyal

to Mr. Lissouba and Mr. Sassou Nguesso's militia had made the postponement all but inevitable as the July 27 election date approached.

Mr. Lissouba's mandate, which was due to expire on Aug. 31, has now been extended until a new president is elected. Mr. Agaton said.

"The current president of the republic, guarantor of the continuity of the state, will stay in office until the democratic election of his successor. He keeps all his constitutional prerogatives," Mr. Agaton said, citing article 69 of the constitution.

However, Mr. Sassou Nguesso's radio, monitored here, said the constitution allowed a postponement of elections only in case of death or incapacity of one

of the declared candidates. Moreover, no candidacies have so far been announced, the broadcast noted.

Under the constitution, once an election is delayed a new one must be called no sooner than 45 days and no later than 90 days after the postponement.

The council did not set a new date, leaving the decision up to the government and politicians.

Mr. Lissouba, when informed of the postponement Sunday, pledged to carry out the electoral process begun in May 1996 to "hold a free and democratic election and to reassure voters who have been dispersed and displaced by the fighting in the capital" that they will be able to participate in the polls.

Former judge and governor race for Seoul party nominee

SEOUL (R) — Former Supreme Court Judge Lee Hoi-Chang Monday led a race to become the South Korean ruling party's presidential nominee but fell short of the 50 per cent of votes needed to win the nomination, party officials said.

Balloting now goes into a second round Monday between Mr. Lee and the runner-up, Governor Rhee In-Je of Kyonggi province, which surrounds Seoul, they said.

There were six contenders in the race, four of whom did not win enough votes to go into the second round.

The embattled New Korea Party faces an uphill battle in presidential elections in December because of political blunders and a string of corruption scandals, analysts said.

"Party members voted for changes. Lee is a respected former judge untainted by corruption while Rhee represents the new generation seeking new politics," said Shin Jung-Hyun, political science professor at Kyunghee University in Seoul.

In the first-ever open race for a presidential nominee by the country's ruling party, Mr. Lee won 4,963 of 12,068 valid votes cast by National Convention delegates.

Mr. Rhee, 48 and youngest of the six presidential hopefuls in the race, won 1,776 votes, only five votes more than prosecutor-

turned-lawmaker Lee Han-Dong.

President Kim Young-Sam, who cannot seek re-election under the constitution, has given up his earlier plan to act as a kingmaker in the face of public criticism over a loans-for-kickbacks scandal involving his close associates.

Mr. Kim's long-time personal aide Kim Deog-Ryong and ex-premier and legal scholar Lee Soo-Sung received support from 1,674 and 1,648 delegates respectively in balloting at a stadium in Seoul.

The sixth, former Seoul Mayor Choe Byung-Yul, won 236 votes.

Four contenders — Kim Deog-Ryong, Lee Soo-Sung, Lee Han-Dong and Rhee — vowed overnight that they would unite against Lee Hoi-Chang in the run-off vote to support whoever emerges as the runner-up among them.

The four together garnered 56.9 per cent of votes against Mr. Lee Hoi-Chang, who won 41.1 per cent support. But political analysts said delegates who had voted for Mr. Kim Deog-Ryong, Mr. Lee Soo-Sung and Mr. Lee Han-Dong would not necessarily vote against Mr. Lee Hoi-Chang, who built his reputation as "Mr. Clean" as a Supreme Court judge.

"Lee Hoi-Chang's 41.1 per cent support is fairly significant against Rhee In-Je's 14.7 per cent votes," Prof. Shin said.

President Kim, who is also party chief, opened Monday's convention by urging party members to rally behind a candidate after mud-slinging and allegations of vote-buying during the past two weeks of campaigning.

"Let's melt down trivial emotional confrontations and conflicts in this furnace of compromise," he said.

Analysts said most worrying for the New Korea Party is the prospect of one of the contenders leaving the party to run alone in December elections to split the ruling camp ticket.

President Kim has repeatedly said he will remain neutral in the nomination race, but some of his loyalists have openly campaigned against Mr. Lee Hoi-Chang, who won prominence by challenging Mr. Kim's administration style.

Governor Rhee is also a member of the president's inner circle and analysts said he would be more willing to protect Mr. Kim after his retirement.

The opposition accuses the president of using money from the scandal-ridden Hanbo group to illegally fund his presidential campaign in 1992.

It also accuses Mr. Kim of dipping into a slush fund amassed by his disgraced predecessor Roh Tae-Woo, who is now serving a 17-year jail term for corruption and human rights abuses.

Southern Philippines ceasefire holds

COTABATO (AFP) — A ceasefire between Philippine government forces and Muslim separatists was holding Monday as preparations for formal peace talks went ahead, officials said.

Army officials and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said the fighters had remained in their positions in the southern Philippines since it took effect at 6:00 a.m. (2200 GMT Sunday).

"The ceasefire is holding so far," said local military spokesman Captain Noel Detoyato.

The MILF pulled out of exploratory contacts last month over an army offensive to capture the major guerrilla base at Camp Rajamuda in Pikit, North Cotabato. That was the rebels' worst battlefield setback in recent years.

Analysts said the truce should help improve the atmosphere for resuming the peace process aimed at ending the last major Muslim rebellion on the main southern island of Mindanao.

Representatives from both sides will meet on July 30 to draw up ceasefire guidelines begin laying the ground for the start of formal peace talks.

Vietnam heralds the triumph of its electoral system

HANOI (AFP) — Vietnamese newspapers, radio and television Monday trumpeted the triumph of Vietnam's electoral system with nearly 100 per cent voter turnout in National Assembly elections at the weekend.

The front pages of all major dailies featured banner headlines in patriotic red ink heralding the Sunday voting exercise, described by Communist Party General Secretary Do Muoi as "the great festival of the people."

More than 40 million people, some of whom braved heavy rains and flooding, went to the polls to choose 450 National Assembly deputies from a field of 663 candidates for five-year terms.

"Tell the world about Vietnamese democracy," the 80-year-old Muoi told

local and foreign reporters on voting day.

The Quan Doi Nhan Dan army newspaper featured photos of senior leaders, miners with headlights, women in minority dress and soldiers, dutifully casting their ballots under the watchful gaze of a bust of revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh.

Full results of the elections are not expected for about a week, but figures are expected to begin trickling out Wednesday.

The elections are not expected to yield any surprises and few voters expect the new faces on the "highest body of the land" will usher in any substantial changes not sanctioned by the Communist Party.

Moreover all 663 candidates, including 11 "independents" — those with no

affiliation to any official organisation — were carefully vetted in advance by the party's umbrella group, the Fatherland Front.

None of Vietnam's three most powerful men, Mr. Do Muoi, President Le Duc Anh and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet sought reelection, but they still retain their positions on the all-powerful Communist Party politburo.

Many cities claimed better than 99 per cent voter turnout, a success the local press attributed to propaganda and organisational efforts of election officials.

Ho Chi Minh City reported 99.61 per cent voter attendance, and Hanoi 99.14 per cent, while northern Thai Binh province claimed 99.97 per cent of voters turned up according to official figures released Monday.

Despite the massive turnout, most voters were apathetic about the results.

"I voted, but I don't really care about the results. It isn't going to make any difference," a recent Hanoi College graduate told AFP.

Loudspeakers began blaring early Sunday morning reminding citizens of "their duty and their right" to go to the polls.

To ensure a massive turnout electoral officials began making housecalls by mid-afternoon Sunday to those who had failed to show up at voting stations.

Voting in Vietnam is not compulsory.

The fruits of those efforts were no better demonstrated than in Truong Sa, a military outpost in the Spratly Islands, where 100 per cent of voters had "fulfilled their duty" four hours after polls opened.

Taiwan urges Beijing to acknowledge China divided

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui Monday urged Communist Beijing to accept that China is divided and acknowledge his island's sovereignty, saying only this would lead to better ties and the goal of national unification.

Mr. Lee, addressing the constitutional assembly, urged Taiwan's business community to put the survival of the Nationalist-ruled island's democracy ahead of

profits and "refrain from temptation" in China's economic boom.

Taiwan screens mainland-bound investment and bans financing of major Chinese infrastructure projects, aiming to avoid overdependence on its rival's economy.

Mr. Lee urged Beijing to stop characterising his government's every move as promoting Taiwan's independence, as this was not only unproductive but also a

moot point since the sovereignty of its exiled Republic of China had been a fact for 86 years.

"This kind of prejudice neither helps exchanges across the Taiwan Strait nor benefits people's welfare," Mr. Lee said.

Mr. Lee said Beijing's People's Republic of China must accept the continued existence of the Republic of China on Taiwan despite its 1949 civil war defeat on the

mainland.

By accepting that the rival states were equal political entities, Beijing could best ensure progress towards their common goal of a unified China, Mr. Lee told the National Assembly.

"We will never waver in our insistence on a single China that is unified as a new China through democracy, freedom and the equitable distribution of wealth," Mr. Lee said.

A somber France, racked by doubt Under pressure to modernise, nation clings to the old ways

By Roger Cohen

PARIS — When Bernard Lietaud started Business Objects, a software company, he applied a simple formula that he naively thought might stir the imagination and shake the torpor of his country: dump French habits and do things the California way.

The results were spectacular. Founded in Paris in 1990 with \$1 million of venture capital, the company was worth close to \$1 billion by early last year.

From the French business community came a collective gasp.

Such rapid growth in a country where fortunes tend to build over generations was extremely unusual. Intent on understanding the upstart who had so quickly created 600 jobs and such wealth, President Jacques Chirac invited Mr. Lietaud to the Elysée Palace.

The 34-year-old multi-millionaire's pitch last July to the president was, he said, simple: a summary of the Silicon Valley mantra he learned while a graduate student at Stanford University and applied at his company. Boost a shareholding culture. Think global. Think marketing. Lower taxes.

The president listened. But no changes to France's heavily regulated economy followed. And when "Business Objects" shares fell recently because of delays in a new software programme, there were some snags "I told you so" from the establishment.

Where other countries have embraced the global entrepreneurship that drives Business Objects, France tends to see its economy and very identity threatened by innovation — a mood that provides perfect feeding ground for peddlers of xenophobia like the National Front Party.

France today is racked by doubt and introspection. There is a pervasive sense that not only jobs — but also power, wealth, ideas and national identity itself — are migrating, permanently and at disarming speed, to leave a vapour grandeur on the banks of the Seine. Rapid technological innovation, radical strategic shifts, the Internet and the global market have contributed to an optimistic mood in the United States, as measured by opinion polls, the ever-rising stock market and an increase in jobs. But these same forces have cast an ominous cloud here.

The old cultural antagonism between France and America, rooted in the fact that both countries aspire to represent some universal model, has been brought to a new level by the American victory that a market- and Internet-driven revolution are seen to represent.

There are now regular snipes at America's "velvet hegemony." Profiting from this sombre mood, the racist, extreme-right National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen has won several victories in municipal elections, including in the southern town of Vitrolles recently. It has gained support precisely by attacking globalisation — portrayed as the death of national culture — and the high unemployment, which it contends stems from untrammelled market forces and immigration. With left and right, socialism and conser-

vatism increasingly indistinguishable, the Front has claimed successfully that it is the only group with a distinct message.

"If we want to send the Arabs and Africans and Asians back to where they came from, it is not because we hate them, it is because they pollute our national identity and take our jobs," said Bruno Megret, deputy leader of the party and husband of the new mayor of Vitrolles. "When we have power, we will organise their return. We will stop renewing their residence cards, and we will force companies to pay a tax on foreign workers that will eventually lead to the foreigners losing their positions."

Such statements have a widening impact. More than a third of French people now say they sympathise with at least some of the National Front's ideas. Even a large city like Toulon has been won. The party's effectiveness appears to reflect the simmering frustration of a country that has lost its way.

As Pierre Birnbaum, a political scientist put it, "Our problem is that we have not found the way to modernise while preserving our imagined community." In other words, how do you leap into the age of the Internet and remain French?

France is still rich and it enjoys a clout beyond its wealth. Its nuclear bomb; its permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, its central place in European security, its hold on the world's imagination through its wines, perfumes and cheeses, and its universalist pretensions themselves — all carry weight.

The country has many excellent companies; the bourse rose 27 per cent last year. As its leaders never tire of repeating in these dark days, France is the world's fourth-biggest industrial power.

But France has a stagnant economy — growth was barely 1 per cent over the past year. Its unemployment rate has swelled to 12.7 per cent of the population, more than double the rate in the United States.

The corrosive anxiety pervading France is captured by a line from Rimbaud — "nos bourreaux économiques" or "our economic horrors" — that is now widely used. The horror is not merely economic. Rather, the phrase captures the extraordinary collective angst of a people seemingly convinced that, as the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut said, "There is a crisis of the modern world."

That crisis, as lived in France, is about cultural and political identity. Market reform, the global panacea, tends to leave the French cold. A hankering for grandeur — some reconciliation of poetry and politics — remains.

In the gathering debate between advocates of the untrammelled global market and those who argue that it accentuates social injustice, France tends to identify with the critics of globalisation. Indeed, it increasingly seems to equate its welfare state with its very identity.

1999, thus yielding control over much economic policy; and it has indicated that it will return to the integrated military command structure of NATO, thus abandoning the most potent symbol of the Gaullist "non" to Washington.

Both moves, however, appear vulnerable to the present mood.

"The French are confronted by a lot of changes," said a senior adviser to Prime Minister Alain Juppé. "Are they prepared to accept them all? France disappearing into the euro, disappearing into NATO, at the same time as we demand more mobility, harder work and sacrifice? An upheaval cannot be ruled out."

France does not look pre-revolutionary. The country's manicured capital, impeccable roads, high-speed trains, glorious food, seductive scents and deep-rooted savoir-vivre provide a compelling image of wealth and tradition. But just as the golden statue on the bridges of Paris distracts the eye from the homeless sleeping beneath the arches, so the moving beauty of France tends to mask what amounts to a kernel of despair.

In Pantin, a few kilometres outside the gates of Paris, there is a housing development called Les Corbillières, most of whose 5,000 inhabitants are immigrants from Algeria, Morocco and West Africa. Into such places are emptied the human flotsam who cannot afford life in the showpiece capital.

Almost 40 per cent of the population is unemployed. Graffiti hurls insults at Mr. Juppé and the police force. Life begins in the afternoon because, for many young people, there is no reason to rise early. Drug dealers hang around in doorways. At the Jean-Jaures Lycée, repeated scrubbing has not quite effaced calls to join the ranks of militant Islamic groups that have carried out recent bomb attacks in Paris.

"Some of these kids have never seen the Eiffel Tower," said Boris Seguin, a teacher at the school. "They live on the margins of the city and the margins of society. If the French republican model stood for one thing, it was integration through education. So you see here how the model is threatened."

The spread of alienated suburbs matters particularly to the French because the revolution and the republic — and their universal resonance — were about the equal rights of citizens.

That system appears to be cracking. The children of these suburbs are angry. In the Tours suburb of La Rabatierie, on Oct. 23, 1996, a 22-year-old Frenchman of Algerian descent, Mohamed Boucetta, was found in a coma with a bullet in his head. That led to a series of events that illustrated France's current malaise.

Rage among Mr. Boucetta's North African friends that no assailant was arrested exploded into rioting; the rioting was then apparently compounded when agents from Mr. Le Pen's National Front sought to exploit the situation to gain votes.

After the first night, tracts distributed by the Front began to appear. Some, emblazoned with the party's torch symbol, attributed the vandalism

to the "immigration policies" of governments of the left and now of the right.

To one of Mr. Boucetta's friends, Yousef Sana, who is 27 and the son of Algerian immigrants, there is no doubt that his friend was a victim of racist violence. "We are at war here in the suburbs. And we, the children of Algerians, are already losers. It's apartheid; we don't even figure in the system."

He added: "If Mohamed were a white French boy, the case would have been solved long ago." More than three months later, the police say the Boucetta case remains a mystery.

Michel Mesmin, a local municipal official, said:

"But just as the golden statue on the bridges of Paris distracts the eye from the homeless sleeping beneath the arches, so the moving beauty of France tends to mask what amounts to a kernel of despair."

"The only thing that is really clear from all this is (that) we are an increasingly uneasy society, haunted by spectres."

That unease appears to be linked partly to the rigidity of a highly centralised system. France's superb technocrats, who planned and managed the country's remarkable reconstruction after World War II, appear overtaken by the global economy, ill-adapted by their formal training to its challenges. Its labour unions, parading the rags of an exhausted socialist dream, often seem equally fossilised.

Its political class is widely seen as a group of cloned eggheads — Mr. Chirac, Mr. Juppé and the foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, all went to the same elite school — out of touch with a population that consistently gives the president and prime minister approval ratings in the 25-to-30 per cent range.

At the same time, because socialism was long the source of idealism in France — the sustenance of Left Bank intellectuals and a strong labour movement — and that idealism was simply exhausted by the 14-year rule of Francois Mitterrand that ended in 1995, the country has found itself suddenly bereft of any meaningful ideological debate.

A slogan of Mr. Mitterrand's second seven-year term was "Ni-Ni" — neither nationalisation nor privatisation. It translated into internal paralysis. It appears that it may now take the left several years to fashion a new message for the electorate.

France suffers in this void. "We have no more clear political markers," said Christiane Laporte, a headmistress. "We feel lost."

This sense of loss is evident in France's reluctance to adopt the new. It is a society where fewer than 15 per cent of homes have personal computers and fewer than 1 per cent are connected to the Internet, figures well below not only the United States but also France's European neighbours.

Opening the new national library in December, Mr. Chirac discovered the computer "mouse" for the first time and gazed at it in wonder. He has spoken dismissively of the Internet as

"an Anglo-Saxon network," although he did meet with Bill Gates, the Microsoft titan, some time ago.

It is not surprising, then, that Mr. Lietaud and Business Objects are scarcely national celebrities, in the mode of a Mr. Gates. Outside business circles, or the world of computer nerds, few people have heard of them.

At the other end of the spectrum from Mr. Lietaud stands Lawrence Bricogne. At age 30, he is four years younger than the entrepreneur, he has a qualification in computer sciences from a technical school but has not worked for almost a decade.

He has a small Paris apartment bought for him by his mother, a piano, a

television, a personal computer and an answering machine. He recently sold his car. Every month, like about 1 million other French people, he collects what is known as the RMI — the acronym for the "minimum revenue for insertion." It amounts to about \$400; it is what the French state reserves for those not receiving any other unemployment benefits.

"The RMI allows me not to work," Mr. Bricogne said. "It's bizarre, it's probably unhealthy. Without it, I would have taken a job some time ago — night watchman, or a kitchen job in a restaurant. Something menial."

Mr. Chirac has tried to lay out a French "alternative" in which the energy of Mr. Lietaud and the solidarity that protects Mr. Bricogne are somehow married. Official calls for a more entrepreneurial spirit and streamlined state have been spiced with criticism of Anglo-Saxon "flexibility" in the workplace — deemed "anti-social." But this bodgepodge has fallen far short of the galvanising message that the French habitually await from their leader in this, the most monarchical of republics.

It has left the country burling towards union with Europe while its overarching welfare systems and cash-haemorrhaging state companies like Air France or the bank Credit Lyonnais make the competitive demands of Europe and its German-dictated budget discipline hard to meet.

Since succeeding Mr. Mitterrand in mid-1995, Mr. Chirac has tried to battle the National Front by embarking on long-delayed reforms — of the army, the justice system, social security, pensions, state companies — that are designed to give the country momentum and adjust it to the realities of this fin de millennium.

On a trip to Tokyo in December, Mr. Chirac spent his time hustling to sell everything from French apples to Airbus planes. For the man who personifies "la gloire de la France," it was a considerable step.

Times change. The numbers in France are not good; and capital and jobs, in the global village,

are not much interested in a "certain idea of France."

France cannot afford its welfare state but is unwilling to abandon it. It has proved unable to create jobs even as the United States — for all its "downsizing" — has created more than 10 million since 1993. But it is loath to ease the health and social security contributions that make hiring prohibitively expensive.

The minimum monthly wage here is about 5,000 francs, or \$900, but after mandatory contributions for pensions, health coverage and unemployment benefits have been paid by employers and employees, it amounts to about 8,200 francs, or \$1,465. So, 36 per cent of the wage cost comes from social payments, compared with about 10 per cent in America.

French and international companies, many of which can now shift jobs to Portugal or Indonesia, are reluctant to hire, particularly as firing anyone is, in the words of one economist, "long, tedious and expensive."

The arithmetic of France's unrivalled social security net is also bleak. Already facing annual deficits of about \$10 billion, the social security budget will face enormous pressure as the number of pensioners increase from 12 million to 17.3 million over the next two decades, while the active population scarcely grows, according to official forecasts.

Yet labour unions are demanding the retirement age be dropped to 55 from 60, in line with a settlement reached last year with striking truck drivers. They have also mounted a blinder attack on proposals to introduce American-style private pension funds, saying they will lead to a system "of every man for himself."

France stands at a crossroads. Mr. Chirac has recently argued forcibly for the euro as the only way for Europe to "fight effectively against American hegemony." And he has pressed — unsuccessfully — for French command of NATO's Mediterranean flank as a symbol of European emancipation from American military tutelage.

Full NATO integration or the preservation of a uniquely French membership? Real market reform — privatisation, private pension funds, a shareholding culture — or preservation of the centralised, state-heavy French welfare model? America as firm friend or threatening purveyor of an undifferentiated global culture? A European currency and a real commitment to build a federal United States of Europe or the temptations of the National Front's nationalism?

Hesitating before these choices, France quite palpably says:

"We want to be an alternative, to show that if nobody resists America any more, at least we will," said the sociologist Jean Baudrillard. "The problem is that because we are not sure which model to embody, we tend to offer simply inertia."

International Herald Tribune

Randa Habib's corner

In the name of democracy

"THEY WILL, they will not." "They will, they will not." Every day we strip daisy petals, wondering about their final decision: Will they participate in the next elections or not?

The suspense has grown to such an extent that it has become very difficult to find daisies in flower shops. Some Jordanians have even started a betting game, and I heard that the bets have reached quite impressive figures.

I personally prefer to use daisies. All kinds of speculations are circulating, making the situation even more bizarre. Some deputies who had affirmed that they were going to run for elections backed-tracked on the initial statements and said that they were not true or accurate. And, of course, they accused "some ill-intentioned parties" of having "distorted" their statements.

Others announced that they "will not take part in the elections, because there is no democracy."

The "bad" situation in the country, "the lack of freedom," "government's intention to rig the elections," "oppressive taxes," are some of the accusations levelled by those who opted to stay out or are in the process of boycotting the elections.

So for the sake of democracy, they decided not to take part in democratically held elections, preferring to join the audience rather than play a part in the show.

I suppose it is easier to watch and criticise than to bear the policy-making responsibility.

Big push planned for high-speed rail network in Midwest

By Gerard Aziakou
Agence France-Presse

OVERLAND PARK, Kansas — High-speed rail advocates in the U.S. Midwest are lobbying for funding of advanced, European-style rail networks as a 21st-century alternative to air and road transportation. As Congress prepared to debate future ground transportation needs, lawmakers, environmentalists and high-speed rail advocates from several states have pledged here to step up efforts to develop a proposed Midwest high speed rail network.

The network would link Chicago with Detroit, Milwaukee and St. Louis with a service of 175-200 kilometers per hour.

The lobbyists also announced plans for a major education drive about the benefits of high-speed ground transportation, which several other U.S. regions plan to introduce in coming years.

Surveys across the region have indicated strong public support for high-speed rail development provided it does not lead to big tax increases.

A Midwest rail corridor linking Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin depends on congressional approval of a six-year, \$174 billion budget proposed by President Bill Clinton.

The proposed budget is part of a new national economic crossroads transportation efficiency act that will succeed existing legislation expiring on Sept. 30.

Safer, more energy-efficient, environmentally friendly and cost-effective than commercial air or road transport, high-speed rail is ideal to link metropolitan areas lying about 160-800 kilometers apart, experts say.

The Midwest is well suited for this kind of network, as it includes 10 major metropolitan markets within 100 to 500 miles of (a Chicago hub), said Minnesota state Senator Sheila Kiscaden.

Advocates cited the success of French, German and Japanese high-speed rail passenger networks and suggested that a mix of mainly European rail technology could be used in the Midwest.

Three types of high-speed rail are being considered for the Midwest: so-called accelerail trains traveling at speeds from 145 to 240 kph, such as Sweden's tilt

trains, Spain's Talgo or Britain's Intercity 225 service.

New advanced steel-wheel-on-rail passenger systems such as France's 320-kph TGV, Japan's Shinkansen and Germany's Intercity Express.

Maglev rail technology under which magnetic forces lift, propel and guide a vehicle over a specially designed guideway at 500 kph or faster.

The proposed Chicago-hubbed Midwest corridor is one of several being planned across the United States.

The most advanced is the \$900 million Northeast corridor, where the U.S. railway Amtrak is working with Canada's Bombardier and Franco-British Gec Alsthom.

Combining TGV technology and Bombardier's computer-controlled tilting, Amtrak's "American flyer" trains, able to do 240 kph, are to go into production this fall and link Boston, New York and Washington beginning in late 1999.

In the south, the \$5.3 billion, 510-kilometer TGV-based Florida Overland Express (FOX) is to link Miami, Orlando and Tampa.

Inaugural service from Miami to Orlando is scheduled for 2004 while the full Miami-to-Tampa operation is planned for 2006.

California is now planning a San Diego-Los Angeles-San Francisco-Sacramento corridor in the \$20 to \$30 billion range for a system with speeds of 320 kph or more.

In the Pacific Northwest, the states of Washington and Oregon are working with the Canadian province of British Columbia to build a 200 kph rail network with tilt-train technology between Vancouver and Eugene, Oregon.

European and Canadian rail makers are meanwhile showcasing their wares across the United States.

Gustavo Gonzalez, executive vice president of Renfe Talgo of America, pushed the Spanish Talgo trains at the meeting here, recalling that Talgo had already sold three trains worth \$30 million in the Pacific Northwest.

Bombardier, which has marketing and manufacturing rights for the TGV in north America, also made its sales pitch.

German and Swedish manufacturers have held demonstrations of their products across the country in recent years.

Hariri says living conditions in Lebanon have improved

BEIRUT (R) — Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri said Monday Lebanon would have no need for new foreign borrowing in the near future if his proposed \$1 billion bond issue to fund emergency social spending was approved.

"There will be no need for new bonds," he told Reuters. "We have a \$1 billion bond that needs approval. There will be no new bonds in the near future. If there are, there has to be funding to issue them," he said on the sidelines of an economic conference in Beirut.

Mr. Hariri, plagued by a chronic cash shortage and worried by signs of unrest and a civil disobedience campaign in the eastern Bekaa Valley, this month summoned cabinet ministers with the 30-year \$1 billion bond proposal.

It approved by the government, bonds require authorization from parliament where foreign debt is a volatile issue.

Financiers say the government had made preparations to issue three-year bonds before the first mention of 30-year bonds. Central bank

sources said any \$1 billion bond issue would likely involve a range of maturities.

Mr. Hariri's opponents say he has poured billions of dollars into reconstructing the country ravaged by a 1975-90 civil war while ignoring rural poverty and development needs and burdening the budget.

His government has come under pressure from former pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) leader, Sheikh Sobhi Tufaili, who has launched a "hunger revolt" in the form of a civil disobedience campaign to underline poverty in Lebanon.

"This government has spent more than any other government on development," Mr. Hariri told Reuters.

Mr. Hariri met with economists and private sector business leaders on Monday to review the government's economic policies, a meeting described as the first of its kind by newspapers.

Participants said the discussion was heated and focused on problems in all sectors of the economy and

controversial issues such as the debt.

Adnan Al Kassab, head of the chamber of commerce and industry, said Lebanon needed to take into account the "deterioration in living conditions" caused by the civil war.

His remarks from a closed session broadcast on state television triggered a quick response from Mr. Hariri.

"I don't agree that there is a deterioration in living conditions," he said. "Living conditions have improved."

Mr. Hariri, an ambitious entrepreneur, is trying to lure foreign investors and has said his multi-billion dollar reconstruction drive is essential for Lebanon's economic health. He said Lebanon's biggest company Solidere's plan to lift all ownership restrictions on its shares and allow foreign investors and local institutions to buy them would likely win government approval.

"This decision was part of moves to encourage foreign investment," he said.

Israel treasury to propose 800 million shekel cut

TEL AVIV (R) — The treasury will submit to the cabinet on Tuesday night a proposal for an 800 million shekel (\$227 million) cut in the 1997 budget, the documents of the proposal made available to reporters on Monday show.

The main 600 million shekel cut will take the form of an 0.9 per cent reduction in spending from each ministry, except for defence and health, which will each face a 0.6 per cent decrease.

The remaining 200 million shekel cut will mean an equal 0.26 per cent reduction at each ministry.

The proposal also includes a 180 million shekel spending reduction needed to offset \$50 million in U.S. foreign aid Israel has agreed to transfer to Jordan.

The spending cuts have the support of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been lobbying cabinet ministers in the past week, treasury sources have said.

The sources said they believe the cut may be enough to guarantee the government will meet its 1997 budget deficit target of 2.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

This includes a domestic deficit target of 2.2 per cent of GDP, or 7.2 billion shekels.

The documents also show that the treasury expects appropriations to come in four billion to five billion shekels under their budgeted level.

This is mainly due to one billion shekels in unclaimed mortgage subsidies and three billion shekels less in public sector salary expenses because of lower-than-expected inflation.

Revenues will fall short of target by 5.0 billion to 5.5 billion shekels. This includes 3.5 billion from customs and value-added tax and one billion shekels in income and other direct taxes, the documents showed.

France to tax big business to meet euro deadline

PARIS (AFP) — France's Socialist government, admitting it is currently well wide of the three per cent deficit criterion for Europe's single currency, unveiled plans Monday to meet the target by taxing big businesses.

Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn, speaking after the publication of an audit of France's public finances, announced an increase of tax on corporate profits of 15 per cent over two years in a bid to cut the deficit

this year from a predicted 3.5-3.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

"We will meet the deadline in '98 under the same conditions as our partners," he said, referring to other European Union (EU) countries, notably Germany, having problems meeting the Maastricht criteria.

France's participation along with Germany in the first wave of economic and monetary union (EMU) is increasingly seen as crucial for the survival

of the whole project.

Mr. Strauss-Kahn was speaking after the presentation of the national audit ordered by Socialist Premier Lionel Jospin after he took office in an upset victory for the French left on June 1.

The audit confirmed that France will struggle to meet the criteria for its 1997 finances. But Mr. Strauss-Kahn said the measures unveiled, centred on the business tax hike, would bring in an extra 32 billion francs.

REUTERS

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF
US Dollar	1.7850	0.5965	1.4745	115.79	1.3740	1748.47	2.0225
DE Mark	0.5571	-	0.3316	0.8219	64.52	0.7647	1.1259
GB Sterling	1.6765	3.0115	-	2.4731	193.91	2.3035	2.9855
CH Franc	0.8782	121.86	0.4035	-	78.51	0.8308	1193.48
JP Yen	0.0088	1.5903	0.5142	1.2735	-	1.1850	15.07
CA Dollar	0.7278	1.3004	0.4327	1.0694	1.10	-	1.2671
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0275	0.3408	0.8844	1510.80	0.7861	-
NL Guilder	0.4844	38.78	0.2945	73.03	57.25	0.6799	843.12
FR Franc	0.1648	0.2961	0.0982	24.3253	19.07	0.2285	33.33

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	IRN	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.6400	0.3032	3.6728	1541.00	3.3825
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saudi Riyal	0.2686	0.1886	-	0.1005	0.3735	0.1078	0.1078	410.88	0.9010
Bahrain Dinar	2.66	1.8780	9.9485	-	0.68	0.8041	-	4087.84	8.9724
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.8033	1.01	423.35	0.9283
Kuwait Dinar	3.2987	2.3355	12.3718	1.3438	12.01	-	12.12	5083.28	0.9293
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	1.0212	0.9911	0.8825	-	419.57	0.9210
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4594	2.4338	0.2446	2.3621	0.1957	2.3834	-	2.1950
Egyptian	0.2558	0.2093	1.1088	0.1115	1.0761	0.0895	1.0858	455.58	-

Energy

Oil	Last	Revised
Brent	18.88	18.88
W. Texas	19.03	19.21
Bonny	18.88	18.88
Dubai	17.10	17.55
U.S. Gas	184.00	184.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4791	0.15804	0.39389	30.889
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48921	0.16231	0.40201	31.5428
KW Dinar	3.2987	5.92788	1.96857	4.87082	382.117
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.76844	1.58128	3.81898	307.314
CY Pound	1.894	3.4022	1.1283	2.7948	210.231

Metal Prices

Metal	Last	Offer
Gold (oz's)	328.3	328.8
Silver (oz's)	4.28	4.3
Platinum (oz's)	413	416
AL (3 Months)	1812	1813
CU (3 Months)	2336	2337
Zinc (3 Months)	1539	1540
Lead (3 Months)	855	856
NI (3 Months)	0	0

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period	1	3	6	9	12
USD	5.53	5.82	6.71	5.81	5.85
GBP	8.69	6.93	7.12	7.25	7.37
JPY	0.28	0.48	0.46	0.81	0.85
DEM	3.07	3.05	3.10	3.25	3.29
FRF	3.23	3.28	3.38	3.42	3.48
CHF	1.37	1.50	1.50	1.43	1.60
ITL	6.87	6.88	6.88	6.88	6.82

Main Equity Indices

Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	P.O. Chg
New York DOW JONES	7861.2	-29.26	-0.37	7883.95	7840.06	7890.46
New York S&P 500	909.84	-5.86	-0.62	913.39	907.12	915.3
London FT-SE 100	4795.5	-81.7	-1.68	4858.8	4795.5	4877.2
Tokyo NIKKEI 225	20248.32	-260.93	-1.32	20545.2	20248.1	20519.3
Paris CAC 40	2889.73	-4.96	-0.24	2871.97	2830.86	2878.89
Frankfurt DAX	4108.4	-88.13	-2.1	4128.52	4087.36	4196.53

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	178.17	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1985	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	334.8	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	139	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	22.13	Spot
Tea (std/kg)	130	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	480	Spot

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	-	-	-
GB Sterling	1.1888	1.1927	-	-	-
DE Mark	0.3955	0.3975	-	-	-
CH Franc	0.8801	0.8825	-	-	-
FR Franc	0.117	0.1178	-	-	-
JP Yen	0.6122	0.6153	-	-	-
NL Guilder	0.3513	0.3531	-	-	-
IT Lira	0.4061	0.4081	-	-	-

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

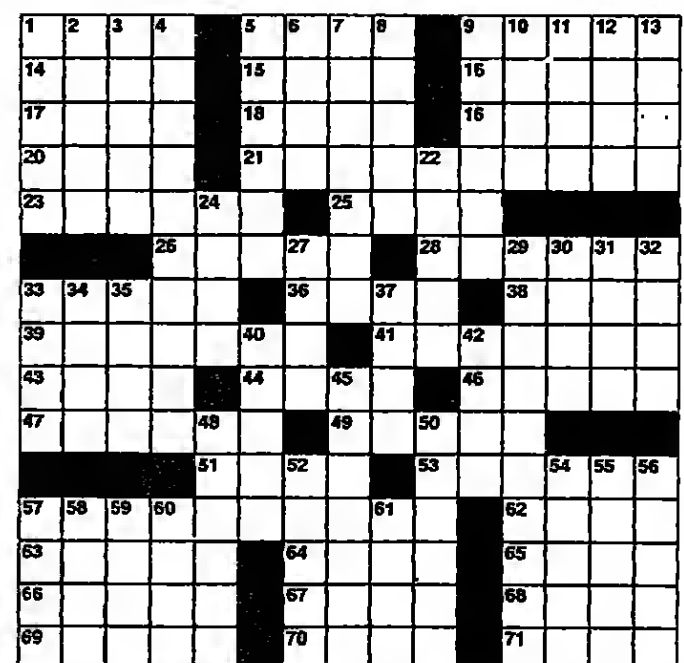
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Singing Ant
- TV panelist, Peggy
- Weather, poetically
- Chinese: pref.
- A cetacean
- Toast word
- City in France
- Author Urs
- garde
- Premed course
- Caribbean island
- Ancient Iran
- Puff
- Weary dissatisfaction
- Groom's attendants
- Warn
- Rouge et —
- Dies —
- City opposite Windsor
- Mouse, to Burns
- Aloe —
- Unit of medicine
- Overture
- A fly
- Option
- Revoke: abbr.
- Unpleasant and stale
- Caribbean islands
- Inner Hebrides
- Fatty tissue
- Ruhr valley city
- Brick abode
- Ring stone
- Rhine tributary
- Byway
- Carries on
- Arduous journey
- Tavern drinks

DOWN

- Musicians' gp.
- English princess
- Lend — (listen)
- Caribbean island
- "Lost Horizon" star
- Vicinity
- Zodiac sign
- Barbara or Clara
- Intones
- Son of Jacob
- Where Basra is
- What's for dinner
- Punta del —
- Accustom
- Involved with
- Biblical preposition
- Caribbean island
- Art deco name
- Weather word
- Rank
- Promo: abbr.
- Dregs
- To be, in Paris
- Wild goat
- Paragon
- Air
- Not connected with religion
- Public tiffs



by Xan Lattimore



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- TV's answer man?
- Diet food words
- Fossil resin
- Vacuous
- Valleys
- Equipment
- Govt. gp.
- unto us — is given
- Obligation
- Skin

THE UN/INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR SECRETARY/ EXECUTIVE SECRETARY,

With the following qualifications:

- Appropriate college degree.
- Excellent command of English; French will be an asset.
- Advanced computer and office management skills.
- Excellent organizational and interpersonal skills.
- Sense of dedication and ability to work productively in a challenging environment.

Please send CV, recent photo and references to:
The Director UNU / ILA C/O
UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN

Peanuts

I WROTE TO SPIKE SO HE'LL BE EXPECTING YOU

REMEMBER, THE MOON IS ALWAYS OVER HOLLYWOOD SO JUST FOLLOW THE MOON...

THE LAST TIME WE WENT SOMEPLACE, HE TOLD US THE NORTH STAR IS ALWAYS OVER MINNEAPOLIS.

Andy Capp

YOU HAVEN'T EATEN YOUR SANDWICH—

NO TIME, PET. IT'S AN EARLY KICK-OFF

READY WHEN YOU ARE, FLO—

TALK ABOUT SUITED, HE'D RATHER PLAY FOOTBALL THAN EAT, AND SHE'D RATHER PLAY BINGO THAN COOK

Mutt'n' Jeff

PROFESSOR, I'LL LET YOU HAVE IT FOR FIVE DOLLARS!

NO, NO! IT'S WORTH NOTHING! NOW GO AWAY! GO, GO!

222 VIOLIN LESSONS

Business

Jordan 'buildi

By Tareq Atallah

The first Jordanian... Total losses accumu... Advance reach JD 5...

THE ACCUMULATED LOSSES OF THE

...the company's... the company's... the company's...

THE BETTER HALF

By J...

...aren't good at giving wor... and attention they need... God invented cocker spai...

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBL... by Henri Arne

...LOVEN... MEAD... PRITOM... LOVELY...

...DUCK... NARA... LET... ING... L...

...GET... SHOE...

Jordanian exhibition in Sakhneen aims at 'building a bridge with the Arabs in Israel'

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The first Jordanian industrial fair in Israel is expected to be inaugurated in the Arab city of Sakhneen in October in a bid to strengthen economic ties between Jordanian businesspersons and Arabs in Israel, an organizer said Monday.

Khalil Shukair, head of Amman-based Peace Bridge Group (PBG), said the six-day exhibition bears no political objectives but is aimed at "building a bridge with the Arabs in Israel."

"We want Jordanian businesspersons to trade with Arabs in northern and middle Israel where Arabs makes up the majority of the population," Mr. Shukair emphasized.

According to Israeli figures, Palestinians constitute almost one fifth of the population in Israel.

Mr. Shukair told the Jordan Times that "all Jordan-made products are welcomed to take part in the exhibition without any limitation. We want Arab masses in Israel to be familiar with Jordanian industry."

"Arabs in Israel earn high incomes which would bode well for such fair," Mr. Shukair said. "I believe holding an exhibition of this sort is economically better than holding it in Bahrain for example," he said.

Mr. Shukair added that he sent invitations to the Amman Chamber of Industry, Amman Chamber of Trade and the Jordanian Businessmen's Association to participate. He said he has received replies from

several Jordanian firms which are willing to participate, but he declined to disclose details how many of these companies have signed up.

"There are technical procedures that each company should undertake before receiving the approval to take part. We will supply them with all facilities to ensure their satisfaction in this fair," he added.

Deputy Mayor of Sakhneen Adnan Trad said the municipality will assign the PBG the task of arranging for the fair.

"Arabs in Israel are ready to sign trade contracts with Jordanian businesspersons to buy all sorts of Jordanian products. The exhibition will be good opportunity for Jordanian firms to open a new markets and increase production," Mr. Trad said.

"We have suffered a lot to get the approval (from Israel) for conducting this fair, which would be an opportunity to mend fences in relations between Arabs and Israel," he said.

Mr. Trad added that the municipality would prepare a "very interesting programme" for Jordanian firms taking part in the exhibition.

Last January, the first Israeli trade fair was held in Amman at which more than 80 Israeli firms participated. The three-day fair drew much criticism from opposition groups in the Kingdom.

The Jordanian business community boycotted the fair, which was held under tight security.

Trade between Jordan and Israel registered below expectations last year with a trade volume of less than

510 million.

The Jordanian government has accused Israel of obstructing the goods movement into Israel and the Palestinian National Authority through several security and administrative measures.

Chairman of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association Hamdi Tabaa repeatedly criticised any trade deals with Israel and called for a total boycott of trading with Israel.

Despite the hardline position of the business community in the Kingdom, several joint ventures between Israeli and Jordanian businessmen, especially in jewellery, textiles and food industry have been entered into. There was no immediate figure on the volume of these ventures.

Egypt biotech commodity ban angers traders

CAIRO (R) — Traders in Egypt said Monday they were annoyed at an Egyptian decree requiring proof that grain imports have not been genetically altered.

They said grain shipments to Egypt were being held to ransom by the decree, described as a shot in the foot for a country which imports much of the grain it consumes.

Egypt's health ministry issued the decree requiring commodity imports for human consumption to have proof that genetic engineering was not used in their production.

Traders were given the decree, dated July 1, last week.

"No one knows what is going on or what is going to be done. This decision was so sudden, nothing has been worked out. We can't do business like this," one trader said.

"This (decree) is really very, very, bad news," another added. "Our hands are tied."

Egypt imports about six million tonnes of wheat a year from suppliers including U.S., France, Australia, and Argentina, as well as large quantities of soybeans and corn.

Traders say many grain shipments have been impounded in ports while others are waiting on the high seas.

The country's main commodities buyer said Monday he would not consider buying grain for up to one month or until the genetic engineering issue is resolved. But one trader said he had heard shipments of Australian and U.S. wheat were being unloaded without proper certificates.

"They want certificates but where are we going to get them from?" a trader said. "No one has thought about this."

The decree also bans imports of any genetically engineered foodstuffs until they are proven safe. It does not say if the ban has taken effect or where exporters can get certificates. Requests by Reuters for information from the ministry have so far been unsuccessful.

The U.S. and European Union (EU) have also clashed over draft EU rules calling for labelling foods containing genetically altered material and demands by some EU activists that they be handled, stored and sold separately.

Protests against genetically modified crops, particularly soybeans, erupted in Europe earlier this year. Some traders say the Egyptian government was scared by the protests.

"It was a bit of a knee-jerk reaction. They got spooked and they didn't think about it all the way through. They didn't look at the facts," an international trader said. "They are going to have to reconsider though, because if they don't they'll run out of wheat and have a bread riot on their hands."

Egyptians consume about 11 million tonnes of wheat annually.

The trader cited an example of how Egypt backtracked on a ban on European beef and live cattle last year because of mad cow disease. President Hosni Mubarak issued the ban but officials relented and let in beef from many European countries.

The United States, one of the main grain exporters to Egypt, has said it was concerned at the decision. U.S. foreign agricultural service officials held talks at Egypt's health ministry on Sunday about the decree.

"We didn't get very far. We need additional information," the U.S. official said. "We (also) need more information from the United States Department of Agriculture on what they can provide to the Egyptian authorities."

Of all importers, the United States is the one with the most to lose, traders say. U.S. wheat imports to their second largest buyer Egypt are unlikely to be affected as there is no genetically modified wheat on the market, but Egypt is also a big customer for U.S. corn, which may all include gene-altered material.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Total losses accumulated by Inma Investment and Financial Advance reach JD 5.8 million

** THE ACCUMULATED losses of the Inma Investment and Financial Advance Company have reached JD5.8 million after the addition of the JD1 million net loss that was recorded in 1996. The overall losses represent 186 per cent of the company's capital and, accordingly, that could affect its continuity. The company was able to generate about JD370,000 in total earnings last year but the high cost of financing that reached JD837,000 was a main factor for the additional loss during 1996.

The company listed the following reasons for the difficult financial situation it is passing through:

1) The effects of Petra Bank/under liquidation on the company in light of the fact that the bank owns 60 per cent of the company and is the main creditor to it. As of Dec. 31, 1996 the company owes the bank a total of JD5.65 million in addition to other indirect obligations totalling JD0.6 million.

2) The effects of the "Swiss loan" and the foreign exchange differential resulting from it. In this regard, a total of JD2.5 million were debited to the company's account at the bank and the company is following up on the appeal it has brought against the bank at the court against the decision to increase its indebtedness by this amount.

3) The letter of credit of the Sudan National Bank. This letter of credit was confirmed by Petra Bank/under liquidation but the bank did not cover the obligations, amounting to JD1.8 million, under this letter of credit.

4) Court cases resulting from the company's debtors not honouring their obligations which total about JD1.2 million.

According to the annual report, the company continued to market real estate, whether belonging to it or to others, as this was the only activity available to it in light of the financial situation described earlier. The company said that despite the little liquidity available, it was able to market JD397,694 worth of its real estate and JD1.9 million worth of real estate belonging to others. As such, the company was able to generate JD271,164 of income that was enough to cover its current expenses. In addition to the court cases and financial entanglements mentioned earlier, there are still disputes being examined in courts that involve some JD8 million. Of this amount some JD5 million are cases raised by the company against other parties (Al Aswaq).

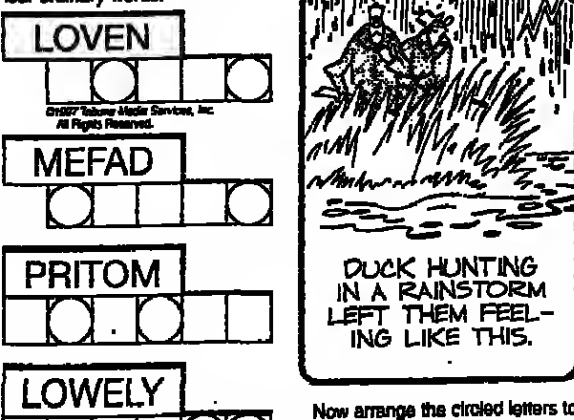
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Men aren't good at giving women all the love and attention they need. That's why God invented cocker spaniels."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: IN 11 0000 (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: LAPEL SINGE FETISH PHYSIC
Answer: Exercising will help do this before a cruise - GET SHIP SHAPE

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET													
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKHANI													
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179													
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 21/07/1997													
PART	12 MONTHS	HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
	297,000	214,500		ARAB BANK	13.5	1.37	22	600	177885	295.00	291.00	2.00	
N	2,340	1,680		JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	52	74291	158228	2.12	2.13	.01	
	1,800	4,100		CAIRO ARABIAN BANK	11.8	2.63	2	1300	7410	5.75	5.70	.05	
	1,210	880		MID. EAST INV. BK.	61.7	0.00	7	7000	6648	.95	.94	.01	
	2,480	2,150		INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	8.1	7.69	5	750	1650	2.20	2.20		
	1,200	4,400		JOR. HOUSING BK.	14.6	3.96	8	11820	57914	4.85	4.90	.05	
	1,480	2,440		JOR. KOWATIK BANK	10.0	0.00	1	3150	8967	2.76	2.82	.06	
	1,050	760		JOR. GOLF BANK	4.7	8.86	2	3000	2370	.78	.79	.01	
	3,870	3,450		ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	17.3	0.00	1	4000	14400	3.51	3.60	.09	
	4,050	3,480		JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	16.2	3.02	78	50763	202024	3.93	3.98	.05	
	1,800	1,110		UNION BK. SAV. INV.	F	0.00	8	2188	1119	1.12	1.39	.07	
	3,800	3,000		JOR. INV. FIB. BANK	20.7	0.00	3	300	968	3.20	3.22	.02	
	1,440	850		PELLELON. INV. BK.	9	0.00	20	109124	102667	.92	.95	.03	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 216.76 %CHG: -0.30 211 268486 744446													
+	1,740	1,290		ARABIAN REAS. INSUR.	9.0	0.00	1	1000	1340	1.29	1.24	.05	
	2,350	1,590		JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	4.5	12.50	7	4700	6700	1.59	1.60	.01	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 113.08 %CHG: -0.15 8 5200 7940													
	1,820	1,500		JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	8.0	6.06	9	4815	7970	1.67	1.65	.02	
	1,550	820		NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	20	9450	14261	1.51	1.49	.02	
	1,030	820		REAL ESTATE INV.	12.1	6.90	2	120	104	.87	.87		
	1,810	480		JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	25.7	0.00	1	750	375	.51	.50	.01	
	2,230	1,630		UNITED CO.	8.0	6.51	6	2300	3680	1.69	1.69		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 108.56 %CHG: -0.24 31 17435 26589													
	4,450	3,100		JOR. CHEMIST PACT.	27.3	2.72	51	82024	331764	4.01	4.05	.04	
	4,140	2,710		JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	11.1	2.50	2	350	1400	4.00	4.00		
	10,250	9,040		JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.4	9.12	10	382	3730	9.80	9.75	.05	
+	7,250	5,610		JORDAN TANNING	6.6	5.56	2	150	810	5.61	5.40	.21	
	1,470	1,050		WOODEN INDUSTRIES	10.4	8.33	1	50	50	1.20	1.20		
	7,150	6,000		JOR. WOODSTOCK HILLS	9.4	3.42	3	111	646	6.00	5.95	.15	
	4,100	3,040		JAR. PHARM. IND.	11.0	5.00	23	7712	30671	3.96	4.00	.04	
	1,820	1,310		JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	16.4	6.06	1	250	330	1.34	1.32	.02	
	5,650	4,200		DAR ALDAMA OV. INV.	13.5	4.55	13	13800	75713	5.40	5.50	.10	
	3,850	2,400		ARAB ALUM. IND.	5.8	10.16	3	3100	7599	2.45	2.46	.01	
	1,960	450		LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	3	1000	460	.46	.46		
	1,310	1,000		ARAB PAPER CONV. TND.	31.2	0.00	5	22050	22479	1.05	1.02	.03	
	1,820	920		NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	3	224	205	.92	.92		
	1,770	510		NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	4	1126	584	.52	.52		
	1,300	510		ZETTERED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	10	3650	1982	.54	.55	.01	
+	2,980	1,630		UNIV. CHEM. INDS.	14.0	6.45	3	300	470	1.63	1.55	.08	
	950	530		JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9	0.00	2	300	165	.54	.55	.01	
	1,670	1,120		ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.5	5.11	2	250	343	1.36	1.37	.01	
	1,430	740		EMPIRE INVEST.	74.9	0.00	5	1350	1034	.78	.76	.02	
	2,020	1,080		UNIV. HOUS. INDS.	F	2.23	7	2250	2473	1.09	1.10	.01	
	1,520	1,000		JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	14.0	9.62	11	2500	2608	1.05	1.04	.01	
	1,090	810		JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.2	0.00	2	400	332	.84	.83	.01	
	1,330	1,080		INTL. TOBACCO	6.2	0.00	3	1600	1809	1.14	1.14		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 126.32 %CHG: +0.19 169 144929 487668													
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.44 %CHG: -0.10 426 436050 1266643													
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 21/07/1997													
	640	350		CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	5	7750	2945	.39	.38	.01	
	670	410		JOR. TRADE PAC.	11.5	0.00	27	201750	94753	.45	.43	.02	
	1,550	1,070		ZARA FOR INVESTMENT	75.4	0.00	1	5000	5750	1.15	1.15		
N	950	540		JOR. FIB. INV. CO.	E	0.00	14	15641	9020	.58	.58		
	840	660		UNION INV. 501	9	0.00	5	9184	1836	.70	.70		
	660	370		ARAB FIB. INVEST.	9	0.00	9	5600	2560	.46	.46		
N	950	720		AL-SABR INV. 751	F	0.00	3	2750	1458	.77	.78	.01	
	730	510		ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	2	150	78	.52	.52		
	720	450		NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	1	1000	450	.45	.45	.02	
	1,300	480		NATL. HLT. SW. MANICO	9	0.00	29	24202	12344	.51	.51		
	960	900		READY MIX CONCRETE	11.3	0.00	1	1900	1788	.94	.94		
	850	710		JORDAN STEEL	23.0	6.85	4	2250	1643	.72	.73	.01	
	580	430		ARAB ELECT. INDS.	9	0.00	1	9950	4978	.50	.50		
	730	600		MIDEAST PHARM. 751	9	0.00	2	1000	360	.62	.61	.01	
	680	550		RATL. PHARM. 851	E	0.00	15	16344	6883	.57	.57		
	320	60		UNION INV. 501	E	0.00	33	36450	12480	.60	.60	.02	
	820	590		NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	1	1000	620	.60	.62	.02	
N	1,000	730		NAT. ALUMINIUM 751	F	0.00	18	20279	10379	.75	.77	.02	
	870	590		HID. EAST COMPLEX	8.1	15.15	15	13200	8682	.66	.66		
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 167.44 %CHG: -0.10 426 436050 1266643													
+ : Few 12 months low + : Listed during the past 12 months + : P/E ratio is 100 or more + : Negative P/E + : Rating is zero or N/A for the most recent year													

Jordan advances to gold, bronze in wrestling

Kingdom's players eliminated in table tennis singles, play doubles today

By Aileen Bannayan
and JSYIF
press committee

JORDAN advanced to either gold or bronze medal matches in wrestling Monday when Abdul Hakim Abu Snehneh qualified to the 69-kilogramme final in Greco-Roman wrestling on the ninth day of the 8th Pan-Arab Games currently underway in Beirut.

Abu Snehneh advanced to meet Egypt's Mahdi Yousef after defeating Palestine's Ramzi Younes 10-3 and Saudi Arabia's Mubsen Yamani on points.

Jordan's Munir Sallaa is slated for a bronze medal and will have to beat Yemen's Samir Rai'i in the 58-kilogramme category to qualify for the medal winning match.

As the wrestling event got underway, Jordan's Fahd Nofal lost to Egypt's Mohammad Atawi 4-1 and Mohammad Sha'bi of Yemen 4-3.

In the 125-kilogramme category, Jordan's Rashdan Nada beat Saudi's Faisal Zahran 8-0 but later lost to Egypt's Mohammad Sayed Khalil 10-0. He still has another round hoping to win to advance to a medal winning match.

Meanwhile, in table tennis, Jordan was eliminated in both the men's and women's singles after they got the bronze in the team event yesterday.

Jordan's Iyad Maknay beat Libya's Taher Mahjoub 3-0 but was eliminated from competition after losing to Egypt's Ashraf Subhi by the same score.

Jordan's Abdul Aziz Rida won his first match 3-0 over Ahyad Younes of Morocco, but later lost to Arab champion Ashraf Hilmi of Egypt 3-0.

Jordan's Alia Tuffaha was also knocked out when she lost to Tunisian champion Afaf Nowwar 3-0.

The doubles matches will conclude today and Maknay and Rida will hope to score some wins to reverse their ill-fortune in the singles.

The swimming competition also got underway Monday with five countries in the women's event and 10 in the men's. Results were unavailable by press time.

Jordan's medal now stand at 16, with four gold, three silver and 9 bronze medals.

The latest was a bronze medal in table tennis. The boxing team had won two gold medals by Mohammad Abu Khadijeh and Ayman Al Nadi and three bronze by Kamal Abdul Majid, Khalidoun Abdul Hameed and Basel Hindawi. Mousa Khalaf took a silver for Jordan in judo.

The Kingdom's medals also include a gold by Nada Kaware in the

discus and a silver medal in the shot put; a gold by Fakhreddin Fuad in the high jump; a bronze by Ala' Abdul Hadi in the triple jump and another bronze by Amal Matari in the women's marathon.

Ayed Khawaldeh became the first Jordanian to win three bronze weightlifting medals; Amer Nairour took silver and bronze medals in fencing.

Over 3,000 athletes are in Beirut for the largest gathering of Arab youth since the event was last held in Syria in 1992.

With Iraqi athletes barred from competition because of a boycott threat by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, 19 countries are taking part in the Beirut Games with only Somalia and the Comoros missing the event.

Twenty events are being contested at the Games excluding kick-boxing, handball, gymnastics, bodybuilding, hockey, diving and water polo for technical and financial reasons.

The Kingdom's 187-strong delegation which includes 94 men and 33 women athletes are competing in 14 of the 20 events. The delegation also includes 27 officials, 20 coaches and 13 referees.

Jordan dropped participation in cycling, tennis and volleyball, and will be competing in athletics, basketball, karate, swimming, taekwondo, table tennis, boxing, equestrian, fencing, soccer, weightlifting, judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling and shooting. Other events at the Games include golf and yachting.

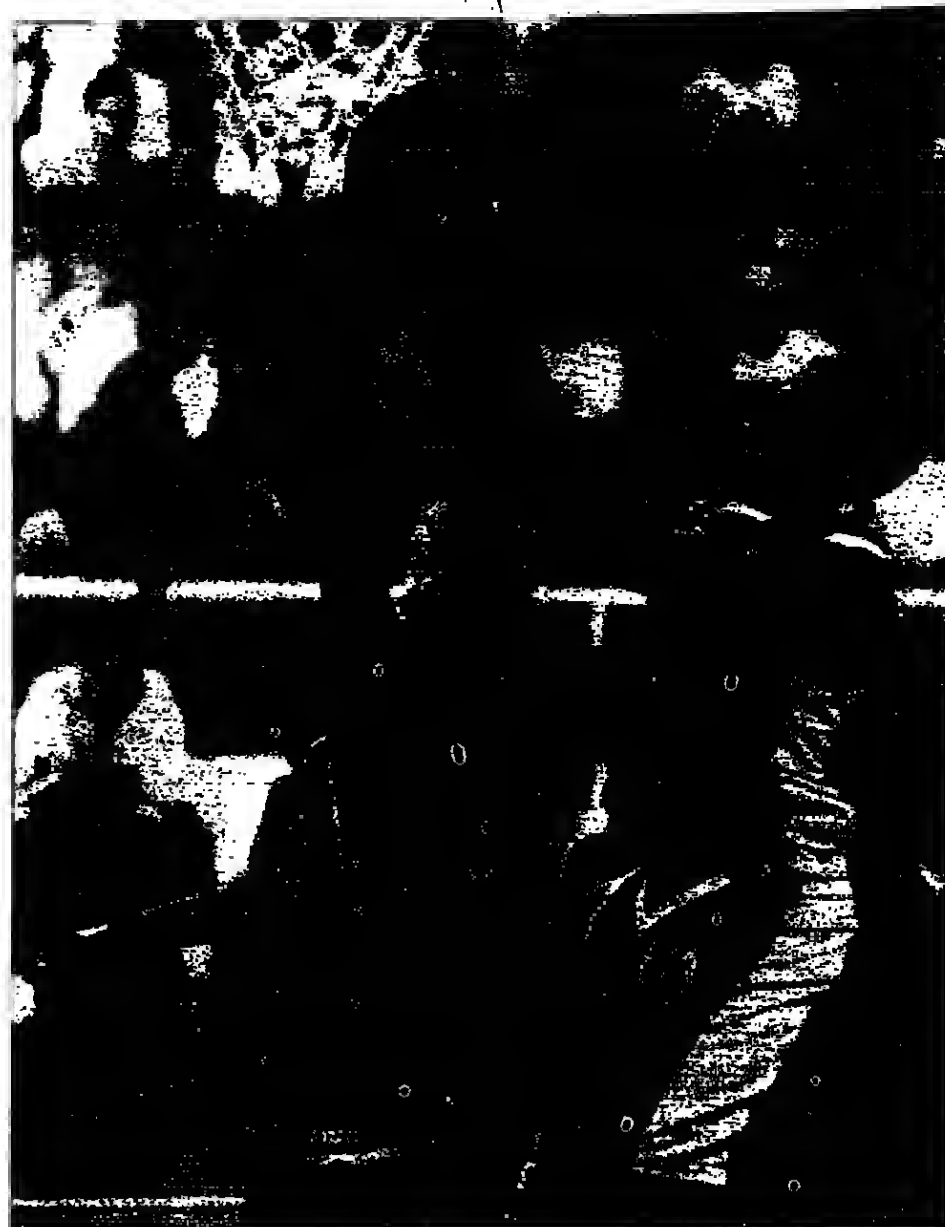
In line with international rules, drug testing was introduced for the first time since the Arab Games were launched in 1953. All gold medalists are being tested for performance-enhancing drugs, in addition to one other competitor selected in a draw in each event.

Jordan has received approval to host the 9th Pan-Arab Games in 2001. Kuwait was chosen as a substitute in case Jordan withdrew their bid.

Jordanian sports officials have underlined their support for organising and taking part in the Pan-Arab Games which have only been held seven times since 1953.

Jordan has taken part in all past seven Pan-Arab Games gaining a total of 49 medals (7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze).

Jordan finished 9th overall in the last Pan-Arab Games in 1992 with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals. The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Rabat 1985 and Damascus 1992.



Fahd Al Ali (L) of Kuwait tries to block Yassin Mahmoud (R) of Qatar at the basket during their basketball match in the qualification round of the Pan-Arab Games (Reuters photo)

Basketball teams aim to beat Syria, Lebanon tonight

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

TUESDAY IS a crucial day for the Kingdom's basketball teams when the men's team faces Syria whom they must beat to qualify to the final round, while the women conclude their matches when they meet Lebanon whom they must beat to clinch the bronze medal.

Both matches will be held at Beirut's Antranik club stadium with the women's match held at 6 p.m. and the men playing at 8 p.m.

While the women's team scored their only win over Syria 56-53, they were impressive in their 52-41 (22-22) defeat to Tunisia and proved they had a chance at a medal against the hosts.

The team has displayed improvement from one match to the other but will be playing with the pressure of finding themselves in reach of the bronze medal.

While a big question mark loomed over the women's team's participation in the Pan-Arab Games after Jordan lost three of their friendly matches against Syria last month, the team was only given the go-ahead to take part in the Games to ensure continuity for the women's game which had been non-existent from 1983-1995 when the team took part in the Asian Championship.

Jumana Salti who only joined the team after her arrival from the U.S. was reported to be suffering from a slight injury but players' expectations were high following their practice Tuesday.

The Lebanese team is known for its fast attacking style and press defence, and is led by Gassia Khacherian and Aline Chalian.

Tunisia had defeated Lebanon 55-52 and Lebanon beat Syria 57-44. Egypt, who beat Jordan 79-46, are another strong contender in the five-team event.

Salti, who was chosen as one of the Asian Championships' top-five players in 1995 is leading the Jordanian team which includes Rana Hussein, Hala Muheisen, Zina Farah, Luma Abu Judum, Hind Ghouri, Hala Khalaf, Hala Ghattas, Lubna Masri, Sira Naghaway, Tala Mauge and Tetyana Qardan.

Basketball is the only team sport Jordan's women will take part in. Individual sports are athletics, swimming, taekwondo, equestrian and table tennis.

Men's team battles Syria

The men's team takes on titleholders Syria and need to beat their opponents to qualify to the second round alongside Saudi Arabia from Group 1 and Lebanon and the UAE from the Group 2.

While Jordanian delegation officials tried to overcome administrative snags surround-

ing the head coach whose tantrums led officials to enlist Rizeq Masri and women's coach Fadi Sabbah as assistants, informed sources told the Jordan Times that Jan Sablieh and Marwan Saeedi, two top players, who were excluded from the lineup would join the team in their crucial match.

The team is led by a young line-up including Zeid Alkhas and Ma'an Odeh both of whom missed the three friendly matches against Syria last month when Jordan won only one match.

That fact adds to Jordan's chances of beating the Syrians led by veterans Anwar Abdul Hay and Mohammad Abu Sa'da.

While Jordan had beat Morocco 59-47, Syria could only manage a two-point win of 57-55 over Morocco. In latest results, Lebanon defeated the United Arab Emirates 70-64, Kuwait beat Qatar 73-61, while Saudi Arabia outplayed Libya 88-55. Jordan's qualifying chances were boosted after Saudi Arabia earlier notched up a 94-70 win over defending champions Syria, and booked the first slot to the second round of the men's basketball competition as only the top-two teams in each group will contest the semifinal round starting July 23.

Playing in Group 1, Jordan beat Morocco 59-47, and Libya 95-66 but lost 88-59 to Saudi Arabia. Group 2 includes Lebanon, Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait.

Jordan's young line-up of Mahmoud Sh'aban, Faisal Nsour and Fadi Saqqa have a tough task ahead with big names like Hilal Barakat, Yousef Zaghloul, Naser Bushnaq and Marwan Ma'touq missing from the line-up.

Jordan had objected to the two group draw since rules stipulate that the nine competing teams should have been divided into three groups with the titleholders (Syria) atop one group, the runner up (Jordan) in another and the hosts (Lebanon) in the third.

However, Lebanese officials dismissed the protest.

Jordan had won the first gold medal in team sports when the basketball team were crowned champions after defeating Iraq 80-78 in the final in the 1985 Games in Morocco. They finished runner-up behind Syria in the 1992 Games in Syria following a controversial match.

Rewards await soccer players as boxing team returns

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AS JORDAN qualified to the second round of the soccer competition after beating Oman 3-1 the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) vice-chairman Saleh Ihsaidat Monday announced that sizeable rewards await players if they fare well in their upcoming matches.

Jordanian businessman Zuhair Beiruti rewarded the soccer team with \$1,500 after their win over Oman and qualification to the second round. He also promised the basketball teams of \$2,000 if the women and men's teams clinch medals.

Jordan topped Group A on score difference over Lebanon who qualified to the second round after beating Libya 2-1.

They are joined by Syria and Kuwait from Group 2. Jordan will contest the second round starting Wednesday when they meet

Group 2 runner-up Kuwait. Lebanon plays Syria Thursday.

The Kingdom's team had tied Libya and Lebanon 1-1. Eight countries took part in the soccer event. Group 1 included Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Libya. Group 2 included Kuwait, the UAE, Syria and Mauritania.

The top two teams in each group qualified to the second round the top two teams of which move to the final while the other two will play for third and fourth places.

Jordan third in boxing

Jordan's five-medal winning boxing team returned to Amman Tuesday and were met by Ministry of Youth and Sports officials who congratulated the athletes for their two gold and three bronze medals in the boxing competition.

Mohammad Abu Khadijeh and Ayman Al Nadi won

two golds on the final day of the competition and teammates Khalidoun Abdul Hamid, Kamal Abdul Majid and Basel Hindawi took bronze.

Meanwhile, the organising committee announced the final standings for the boxing event. Algeria came first, followed by Egypt in second place and Jordan finished third.

Naghaway has good start

Khaled Naghaway had an impressive start in the individual skeet in which 23 competitors from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar and Kuwait are taking part.

Naghaway hopes to join the top six will qualify for the final round.

The shooting team of Aysar and Mohammad Hiyari and Sa'ad Al Absi finished fourth among five nations in the team event.

Schedule of events of Jordanian competitors at the 8th Pan-Arab Games for Tuesday July 22, 1997

- Basketball Jordan-Syria (men's match)
- Jordan-Lebanon (women's match)
- Table Tennis Singles and doubles finals
- Shooting Khaled Naghaway (final round)
- Swimming
- Wrestling

Medal Standing (excluding Sunday's results)

Nation	G	S	B	Total
Egypt	47	19	21	87
Algeria	23	27	29	79
Morocco	12	12	6	30
Qatar	8	5	1	14
Tunisia	7	5	11	23
Saudi Arabia	5	5	15	25
Jordan	4	3	9	16
Syria	3	18	22	43
Lebanon	2	13	19	34
Kuwait	1	5	10	16
Oman	1	1	1	3
Sudan	0	1	2	3
Palestine	0	0	3	3
Bahrain	0	0	1	1

Equestrian, karate teams prepare

Both the equestrian and karate delegations arrived in

Beirut in preparation for their respective competitions which begin Thursday. The taekwondo event begins Tuesday.

Asian World Cup qualifiers to be played home and away Bahrain, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to host matches

ZURICH (AFP) — The final Asian World Cup qualifying round will be played on a home and away basis, football's governing body FIFA decided on Monday.

Kuala Lumpur, Bahrain and Singapore had bid to hold a finals tournament as in past Asian qualifying competitions.

But FIFA's World Cup organising committee, chaired by Lennart Johansson, decided against a single tournament venue on Monday. Saudi Arabia and South Korea — who played in the 1994 USA World Cup — were seeded.

They will be kept apart when two

groups of five teams are drawn on Tuesday.

The other eight who will go into Tuesday's draw are China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan.

The winners of each group will automatically qualify and the runners-up in each group will play-off for the right to also directly qualify for the World Cup finals in France next year.

The loser of the playoff will face Australia, the Oceania Zone winners, on a home and away basis for a place in France.

The decision to abandon the tournament format met with a mixed reception from Chinese officials.

"It's a big change," said Wang Junsheng, the Chinese Football Association general secretary.

"The timing for the second round had been decided last year and our league has been arranged according to that schedule. It will take at least eight to 10 weeks for our league to finish."

"We will have to rearrange everything, including the league and the preparation for the national team."

"Frankly, though, home and away is a fair competition, but our problem is with the timing."

Chinese coach Qi Wusheng took a pragmatic approach.

"I have no choice," he said. "The decision has been made so we will have to get ready and we will have to get the team into camp as soon as possible."

"The fans will be happy about this and, of course, the players will have a good opportunity to play well in front of their own people."

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PHILADELPHIA "2"

Macaulay Culkin & Elijah Wood ... in

THE GOOD SON

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238
PLAZA

Tom Cruise...in
JERRY MAGUIRE

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30

Adel Imam...in
BAKHIT AND ADELAH (PART 2)
(Aljardal wal kanaka)
Shows: 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420
CONCORD

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Kevin Costner & Rene Russo...in
TIN CUP

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45

CONCORD "2"
Michael Jordan...in
SPACEJAM
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Chang wins Washington title

WASHINGTON (R) — Going into the final of the Legg Mason Tennis Classic on Sunday, Michael Chang referred to opponent Petr Korda as "a shotmaker. Petr certainly has the ability to beat anyone when he's on."

Korda was "on" in the opening set, smacking several out-right winners and closing the set with a wicked forehand drive that not even the speedy Chang could run down.

Just as suddenly, however, the momentum changed and Chang charged to a 5-7 6-2 6-1 victory to capture his ATP tour-leading fifth event of the year.

"This surface is my favorite," Chang said after running his hardcourt record this year to 28-3. "It's the one I do my best on and the one I'm most comfortable on."

Korda endorsed this assessment, saying, "if you don't have legs and energy, you just don't beat Michael Chang." By reaching the final, Korda will see his world ranking climb into the top 20 this week.

The Czech Republic native tired badly after working for nearly an hour in the first set and a wave of inevitability set in.

"I started to get tired in the middle of the first set," he said.

Chang broke serve to open the second set and coasted from there to complete a successful defence of the Washington tournament.

"All I tried to do against Korda was play solid tennis consistently and keep the errors down," Chang said.

This he did, committing just one double fault to Korda's nine and being charged with 13 unforced errors to his opponent's 64.

"I can't complain," Korda said. "I had a good tournament, I like the way I'm hitting the ball and I did my best. But I had no energy today. What I went through all week, playing mid-day matches, cost me. Michael came in fresh. If I had energy, he would have had a heckuva time beating me."

"I needed this," Chang said. "I struggled on clay and grass (in Europe), so it's great to get off to a good start in the summer. When I won here last year it was a good steppingstone for a good year."



Houston Astros' pitcher Darryl Kile delivers a pitch during NL action against the Montreal Expos at Olympic Stadium in Montreal. Kile gave up four hits as he pitched his fourth complete game shutout of the year in the Astros 9-0 victory over the Expos (Reuters photo)



Colombian soccer player Victor Aristizabal (R) and Ecuadoran goal keeper Francisco Ceballos jump for the ball during a World Cup France '98 qualifier in Barranquilla. Colombia defeated Ecuador 1-0 (Reuters photo)

Rubin fends off Kournikova to win New Jersey tourney

MAHWAH, New Jersey (R) — Anna Kournikova, the talented 16-year-old Russian with a bright tennis future, appeared in control of her final match against Chanda Rubin, but careless play near the end cost the teenager the title at the \$125,000 AP women's classic on Sunday.

The American pulled out the decisive third-set tiebreaker with the help of a double fault, winding up with a 6-7 (2-7) 6-4 7-6 (7-4) victory.

"It was good to still be in the match after being down in every set," said the 29th-ranked Rubin, who won \$20,000.

"I played more aggressively in the final two sets and hung in there while she made a lot of errors. She tried too many risky shots," Rubin said.

Kournikova, who blew a 4-2 lead in the second set and a 3-0 margin in the third, fell behind for good in the final tie-breaker when she committed her eighth double fault to provide the 21-year-old American from Louisiana with a 5-3 lead.

Kournikova won the next point with a cross-court winner, but failed to return two serves to give Rubin the title.

"I didn't feel any pressure as the favourite," said Kournikova, who had been the only player in the tournament not to lose a set.

"I felt in control and thought I could win. I never expected that the match would be easy even though I had won easily at Wimbledon."



Anna Kournikova

Pantani scales new Tour de France peak

MORZINE, France (AFP) — Marco Pantani of Italy, who had threatened to quit on Sunday, won his second stage in three days to go third in the Tour de France on Monday.

German Jan Ullrich, third behind Frenchman Richard Virenque, kept the leader's yellow jersey for the sixth day running.

The two men finished 1min 17sec behind the 27-year-old Italian climbing specialist, who was a majestic winner of Saturday's climb up the dreaded Alpe d'Huez, where the 1968 Olympic bobsleigh run was built.

Pantani struggled home sixth, three minutes behind Virenque, complaining of being unable to breathe in Sunday's climb to Courchevel and threatened to call it a day if his chest infection did not clear up.

Last year's winner Bjarne Riis of Denmark finished eighth on Monday, 2min 6sec behind Pantani, to slip to fourth, 1min 42sec behind the man known as little elephant, who equalled his 1995 feat of winning two stages.

Pantani missed last year's tour after breaking a leg in training and crashed badly on this year's giro d'Italia.

Virenque and Ullrich, first and second in Sunday's climb to Courchevel, filed to

respond when he attacked as they started the last-but-one climb 20km from the finish.

"I missed a good chance of another stage win," said Virenque, who is heading for his fourth successive King of the mountains title.

Ullrich was glued to Virenque's rear wheel for most of the latter part of the 208km stage.

Pantani was 10min 13sec behind Ullrich with Riis a

further 1min 42sec in arrears.

French world No. 1 Laurent Jalabert, trying to rescue another bad Tour, mourned a

solo attack for 80km before

being reeled in. Tuesday's 16th stage of 181km is from Morzine to Fribourg in Switzerland.

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Ronaldo move to be settled Tuesday

ZURICH (AFP) — Football's world governing body FIFA will rule on Tuesday on whether Ronaldo's \$27.6 million world record transfer from Barcelona to Inter Milan can go ahead.

Barcelona and Inter Milan have been in dispute for several weeks over who owns the gifted Brazilian.

Ronaldo will make football legal history if FIFA ratifies his move from Spanish side Barcelona to Italy.

Ronaldo paid Barcelona the four billion pesetas (\$27.6 million) theoretically needed to make him a free agent although FIFA initially agreed the buy-out was restricted to Spanish League teams.

Inter argue that once a player becomes a free agent in his own country he is free to join a club in another country.

The only case where a player bought out his contract and moved to another club was when Russian midfielder Valery Karpin moved from Real Sociedad to Valencia.

However, Barcelona appeared resigned to losing Ronaldo. They have reportedly made a \$13 million bid for Brazilian side Flamengo's 23-year-old Savio (Savio Bortolini Pimentelli).

Ronaldo expected to play for Inter Milan against English champions Manchester United in a friendly next weekend.

The 20-year-old striker said from Brazil: "I'll be in Italy soon and I'll be playing against Manchester."

"I'm sure that FIFA will sort this issue out quickly and allow me to start the new season. I want to play (for Inter), and I'm confident I will."

"I made a decision that respects every rule and every agreement I made with Barcelona. Every move has followed the rules of world football, which I'm proud to be a part of, and the agreement made with Barcelona."

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WITH OMAR SHARIF & TARNAN HIRSCH

WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q. 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AKQ 10965 : Q6 : Void : AK 765
- The bidding has proceeded:
- | | SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1A | Pass | 2C | Pass | |
| 2 | | | | |
- What do you bid now?
- Q. 2 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
- 41 : AK96432 : 87 : AK63
- The bidding has proceeded:
- | | SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1A | Pass | 2C | Pass | |
| 2 | | | | |
- What action do you take?
- Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
- AKK8743 : 78 : AK : AKQJ10
- Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one spade! What
- Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AK98 : AK 102 : QJ9852 : A void
- The bidding has proceeded:
- | | SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1A | Pass | 1A | Pass | |
| 2 | | | | |
- What do you bid now?
- Q. 5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AK 753 : AQ 109 : KJ93 : 42
- The bidding has proceeded:
- | | SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|----|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1A | Pass | 2C | Pass | |
| 2 | | | | |
- What do you bid now?
- Q. 6 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
- AK97 : Void : K9843 : AJ7652
- Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

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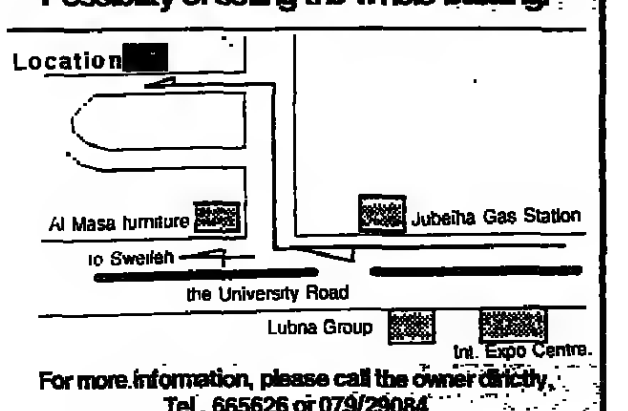
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UNICEF slams the rich over Third World hunger

PARIS (AFP) — As millions of children in developing countries remain victims of poverty and malnutrition, aid from industrialised countries has slumped to its lowest level in 45 years, according to the fifth annual UNICEF report "The progress of nations," published Tuesday.

Official development assistance from industrialised countries has dropped to an average of 0.27 per cent of their combined GNP, well below the 0.7 per cent objective set by the U.N. children's foundation.

The countries which gave the most are Denmark, at one per cent of its GNP, and Norway at 0.9 per cent. France allocated 0.58 per cent and Germany 0.034 per cent, with the U.S. contributing 0.1 per cent.

In absolute dollars, Japan gave the most (\$14.5 billion), ahead of France (\$8.4 billion), Germany (\$7.5 billion). The U.S. fell from first place in 1990 to fourth at \$7.4 billion.

The \$159 billion of private investment money in 1995 flowed to developing economies such as China and Mexico, while the poorest countries, mainly in

Africa, received almost nothing.

With all this disparity the battle against underdevelopment is far from being won, UNICEF reported.

The infant mortality rate worldwide has been cut in half over the last 30 years, and inexpensive health programmes have saved the lives of 2.5 million children every year since 1985.

However, the enemies of these children still come in the form of measles, respiratory infections, dehydration, and malnutrition. In nine African countries, including Nigeria and Angola, one in every five children dies before the age of nine.

UNICEF is also alarmed about the spread of the AIDS virus, which by the year 2010 will be the cause of 41 per cent of infant deaths in Kenya and 61 per cent in Botswana.

UNICEF reported that since 1990, more and more people throughout the world have access to clean drinking water, from 2.5 billion in 1990 to 3.3 billion today. However 300 million people live without proper sanitation.

In total, half the planet's people — three billion indi-

viduals — do not have the luxury of toilets, nor of decent waste disposal systems.

Water polluted with excrement leads to 2.2 million infant deaths a year from diarrhoea, as well as a recent cholera epidemic in Peru and outbreaks of the plague in India.

Individual government policies are also partly responsible for these poor conditions. In Nairobi, for example, public investment for water and sanitary projects was divided by 10 from 1981 to 1987.

UNICEF names violence against women as the "most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today."

In India more than 5,000 women are killed each year, judged as not having adequate dowries by their in-laws, and in the U.S. a woman is physically abused every nine seconds, a victim of domestic violence.

UNICEF also says the children of the world often face unfair justice systems and "harsh punishment."

In South Africa, Thailand and most states in America, the age a child can be held responsible under penal law is seven.



30TH INJURED PLAYING GAMES: Mexican Alejandro Silveti is thrown to the ground by a bull during the second day of the feria in Beziers Sunday. Silveti was gored in the hip (AFP photo)

Turk nationalists push for headline stance against EU

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey, frustrated by its exclusion from European Union (EU) enlargement plans, has given signs of turning its back to Europe under the foreign policy management of hardline nationalist coalition partners.

Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit told reporters Sunday that Turkey will revise its customs union accord with the EU at the council of ministers "and make an appropriate decision."

"Turkish business circles are also expressing their unease regarding this agreement," he added.

Foreign Minister Ismail Cem, a top aide to Mr. Ecevit, also said: "Our trade deficit with the EU was \$5 billion in 1995. After the customs union accord took effect in 1996, this deficit

rose to \$11 billion that year."

"We will ask the EU to correct some provisions of our partnership that we think are wrong," Mr. Cem said.

Mr. Ecevit and Mr. Cem are from the Democratic Left Party, a hardline nationalist group in conservative Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's secular coalition government that replaced an Islamist-led cabinet last month.

Their remarks represent a major deviation from Turkey's traditional western- and European-oriented policies, but EU officials and analysts said that their stance would not be shared by Mr. Yilmaz's conservative Motherland Party.

"So far the situation has not changed. Our official contacts indicate that Turkey will continue with the customs union and even accelerate the implementation of the outstanding legislation," Michael Lake, the commission's representative in Ankara, told AFP.

Another European diplomat, who asked not to be named, also said the EU believed Mr. Yilmaz and Mr. Ecevit did not share the same opinion on ties with the bloc.

"There is a strong pro-EU lobby in Yilmaz's Motherland Party that would not let Ecevit and his supporters ruin Turkey's EU relations," Ankara-based economist Burak Bekdil said.

"The customs union deal is likely to cause the first crack in the new government. Another possibility is that Ecevit's statement might be for domestic consumption," Mr. Bekdil said.

Mr. Yilmaz has not publicly commented on Mr. Ecevit's remarks, but analysts said the premier was expected to bring the issue to a cabinet meeting later Monday.

Mr. Ecevit, also known for his headline position on the Cyprus question, had been against the signing of the customs union agreement with the EU when former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller secured the deal in late 1995.

Under the accord, which took effect on January 1, 1996, Turkey and EU member countries lifted trade barriers in almost all trade fields, excluding agricultural products.

However, Turkey complains that the EU has failed to free financial aid worth over \$3 billion designed to

partly compensate for Ankara's losses, due to a veto by its arch rival Greece.

Turkey is the only non-EU member which has a customs union accord for special trade ties.

The European Commission last week agreed to back the entry of five eastern European states plus Cyprus into the EU in the next decade, with accession talks due to start in early 1998.

Turkey was given no such encouragement.

Mr. Cem said: "We had believed the customs union accord was a step toward Turkey's full membership to the EU, but this has not taken place."

The European commission move has also prompted Turkey to toughen its position on the Cyprus question, two weeks after the first intercommunal Cypriot talks in three years for a peaceful solution to the dispute.

In Nicosia, Sunday, Mr. Ecevit announced plans to gradually integrate northern Cyprus, which it occupied 23 years ago, into Turkey to match any moves by the Greek-Cypriot part of the divided Mediterranean island to join the EU.

Anti-feminist wife carries cross across Britain

LONDON (R) — A wife convinced that feminism has gone too far is carrying a cross from one end of Britain to another, and spreading the word that women should be more submissive to their husbands. "In Scotland, one couple who had been divorced for 23 years heard our message and decided to reunite. It has been amazing," said Angie Taylor, 46, Taylor, who is carrying the wooden cross from John O'Groats in Scotland to Land's End in southwestern England, said: "A woman can be a successful businesswoman but she should not be seeking fulfillment for herself." The virtuous wife does this selflessly for her family and for the glory of her husband and in loving submission to him," she told the Sunday Telegraph newspaper during the walk, which is being supported by Evangelical churches. Her husband, David Taylor, who with his wife counsels drug addicts and alcoholics, said: "I am very proud of her."

Thieves run wild during Brazilian police strike

BRASILIA (R) — Thieves are running amok in the northeastern Brazilian city of Recife, taking advantage of a policemen's strike to rob at will, newspapers and officials said. The newspapers said Pernambuco state governor, Miguel Arraes requested extra army reinforcements Saturday to try to bring calm back to the state capital. "A wave of violence has brought Recife to a stop. Without police in the streets, criminals took over the capital of Pernambuco yesterday, robbing people and shops and machine-gunning automatic cash machines," Globo newspaper wrote. "What the newspapers say is basically true, but I can't confirm any details," an official at Recife police headquarters said, declining to give his name.

Paula Jones' sister to cash in on Clinton sexual harassment charge

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Charlotte Brown, sister of President Clinton's accuser Paula Jones, is to publish a book on her younger sister's sexual harassment allegations. Entertainment Weekly reports. Brown publicly has commented that she believes her younger sister intends to profit from the scandal and now it seems Brown herself wants to cash in. She will be offering an "inside view" of Jones' sexual harassment charges in a top-secret book proposal reportedly on its way to top publishers, the magazine said. Brown, who recently had a "falling out" with Jones, will tell "what, specifically, is behind Paula's pursuing the president as she is," according to her agent Frank Weimann.

Julia Roberts and Richard Gere to play it again

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Julia Roberts and Richard Gere could be reunited in the hope of a new box-office smash. The "Pretty Woman" co-stars have been looking for another project to share for the seven years since that box-office hit. The New York Daily News says they are talking about playing ghosts in Wayne Wang's flick about love in the afterlife, "Manhattan Ghost Story." Roberts may also be interested in playing a woman who seduces Gere, with disastrous consequences, in "Intolerable Cruelty" — a movie scripted by Joel and Ethan Coen.

...Palestinian woman stabs Israeli soldier and is wounded on the spot. The soldier was taken to a hospital and is in a serious condition. The woman was taken to a hospital and is in a serious condition.

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By Jarek Asanowicz
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THE ONE AND ONLY IN JORDAN

THE AMERICAN RESTAURANTS IN ONE FOOD COURT

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Let your appetite guide your choices from any of our delicious five self service counters at the ground floor and enjoy your eating outside in a relaxing atmosphere at our patio seating area.

Full Service Restaurant

Enjoy the elegance of our full service restaurant at the second floor and let our professional waiters and waitresses welcome and serve you from our selected variety of all the five concepts

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